SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD

POPULAR SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM

From the German of

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WITHDRAWN

VOLUME II

THE COMMANDMENTS

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POPULAR SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM

SERMON I

On the Necessity of Observing the Commandments

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (*Matt.* xix. 17).

Our Sunday meditations have been devoted for a considerable time to the first division of the catechism, which treats of faith. Having concluded our instructions on that subject we now enter upon the consideration of the commandments.

This portion of the catechism opens with the question: "Is it enough to belong to God's Church in order to be saved?" "It is not enough to belong to the Church in order to be saved, but we must also keep the commandments of God and of the Church." This answer forms a link connecting the subject of the commandments of God, on which we now propose to embark, with the first part of the catechism, which, as we have seen, teaches us what faith is, explaining in their order the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed. It may be thought, and it has been asserted, that faith is all-sufficing and that nothing further can be necessary for sanctification than to believe what God has revealed. But it is by no means sufficient; it is essential that we also keep the commandments.

Therefore, the catechism, after instructing us concerning faith, goes on to set before us those commandments which we are called upon to obey.

All believing Christians are agreed that faith is necessary to the attainment of holiness: "Without faith it is impossible to please God"—"He who believeth not is already judged." One would have expected to find them also universally agreed that the observance of the commandments is an equally essential part of religion; but this is not the case. St. Augustine has stated in more than one passage that even in the time of the apostles there were false teachers who denied the necessity of good works. St. Irenæus mentioned Simon Magus as one of these false teachers, and later a certain Eunomius fell into the same errors. The leaders of the great schism in the sixteenth century laid particular stress on faith alone being necessary to attain eternal life. If this teaching be true, then the performance of good works or the keeping of the commandments is of no avail, and some have gone so far as to assert that good works are not only useless but even harmful. Holy Scripture and the traditions of the Church show us the fallacy of this doctrine; moreover, the teaching of the Church on this point is corroborated by our own reason.

I. From Holy Scripture.—Our Saviour Himself says in the Gospel, in words which scarcely admit of misconstruction, "Not every one who saith to Me 'Lord! Lord!' shall enter into My kingdom, but he who doth the will of My Father, he shall enter into My kingdom." He who addresses our Saviour as "Lord" would undoubt-

edly be one who has faith; but mark that it is not enough to say this in order to be admitted into His kingdom; something more is required, namely, to do the will of the Father, which consists in keeping the commandments.

We hear from our Saviour's own lips the very words in which, as judge, He will address mankind at the end of the world. To those whom He will call to enter into eternal life He will say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." And on what grounds shall they be allowed to enter into heaven? Pay heed to the answer: "For I was hungry and you fed Me; thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; naked, and you clothed Me," etc. Why, then, shall they enter heaven? Because they performed good works and because they kept the commandments, particularly that one by which we are enjoined to love our neighbor.

If more evidence is needed we have only to read on a few lines further and we shall hear the sentence passed upon those whom our Saviour will banish to hell. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Why? Is it because they did not believe? No; the cause of their damnation is shown to be that they failed in love to their neighbor. "For I was hungry and you fed Me not; thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink," etc. Whether they believed is a point which is not even mentioned.

After considering these words of our Saviour let us glance at those of His apostles. St. James writes: "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a

man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" These words are so clear, and dealt such a blow to the teachers of error that they had nothing to advance against them; so, in order to justify themselves, they asserted that the Epistle of St. James has no rightful place in Holy Scripture. But does one disprove a man's words by gagging him? St. Augustine is of opinion that the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, St. James, and St. Jude were all written with the express intention of showing that works are necessary to salvation and that faith alone can not save us.

II. From the Traditions of the Church, it can also be shown that faith alone, without the observance of the commandments, does not suffice for salvation. Among the great number of holy Doctors and Fathers of the Church it would be impossible to find one who does not enjoin the practice of good works and the observance of God's commandments as an essential means to salvation. In the utterances of some of them we find it merely touched upon in relation to other subjects; but many among them have written and spoken definitely on this doctrine, by means of treatises and sermons, with the express purpose of refuting heresy.

III. Reason Alone will suffice to convince us that the observance of God's commandments is necessary to gain eternal life. It is undeniable that God and His Church have given us definite commandments. Our Saviour said to the rich young man: "If thou wilt enter into eternal life, keep the commandments." Now, any one giving

commandments, does so desiring and intending that they shall be observed. Does God, then, desire and intend that we should keep His commandments or did He send our Saviour to do away with them? Surely this last can not be true. Christ Himself said that He was not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. Then why were these commandments given to us? Would it not, do you think, be incompatible with the dignity of God almighty to have laid down commandments for us in jest? Would it not be incompatible with His justice to tell us to do that which He knew was too hard for us? We should blame any ignorant carter who gave his horse too heavy a load to draw. Can we suppose that God, having given us the commandments, does not care whether we observe them or not? That surely would be incompatible with His holiness; so we come back again to our first question: If the observance of them is a matter of indifference to Him, why did God give us commandments? We must see that since God has given them to us it must be His will that we should keep them, and this being so it is impossible that those who are faithful to them should be treated in the same way as those who set them at naught. On the contrary, the breakers of God's laws offend Him, become His enemies, and have no claim to the reward promised to those who love Him. Who, then, are they that love Him? They who keep the commandments: "He who hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Having clearly realized that we must keep the commandments, it is a great relief to us to know

that they are all comprised in one which is the greatest of them all, and which embraces all others: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with all thy strength. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like unto this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Our Saviour gave this answer to that doctor of the Law who asked Him which was the greatest commandment, referring Him to the Old Testament, and to the Law: "How doth it stand in the Law? How readest Thou?" And the doctor, repeating the words we have just quoted, Our Lord replied to him: "Thou hast answered rightly; so do and thou shalt live." Other Evangelists add these further words of our Saviour's: "On these depend the whole Law and the prophets," that is to say, everything required by the Law and the prophets is contained in this commandment.

For this reason it is called the chief commandment and whoever keeps it fulfills the whole Law, just as the breaking of any of the other commandments involves also violation of this primary one. There, are, however, three great duties comprised in this commandment, namely, love of God, love of our neighbor, love of ourselves.

Now, as we enter upon the consideration of the commandments of God, let us at the very outset resolve to listen attentively to the instructions and explanations given, with responsive and willing hearts. We read in the second book of Esdras (viii. 1) that when, after the Babylonian captivity, a great number of Jews returned to the Holy

Land, "all the people were gathered together as one man in the street which is before the water gate, and they spoke to Esdras, the scribe, to bring the book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel." After their long captivity they greatly desired to hear the word of the Law. "Then Esdras brought the Laws before the multitude of men, women, and all who could understand. . . . And he read it plainly in the street from morning until mid-day." And how did the people listen to him? "The ears of all the people were attentive to the book." They stood silent hearkening to what was read. "And they kept the solemnity seven days." What zeal to learn the Law of God did these Jewish people show! Let us Christians also bestir ourselves to learn God's commandments. It is no unimportant matter, for in order to be saved we must fulfill the Law, and, therefore, it is necessary first to know it. Many grievous sins are committed through culpable ignorance of the commandments. Do we lack opportunity for learning what is necessary concerning them? No; teaching is given both by word of mouth and in printed books; both in school and in church, year in, year out. Ignorance of the law can not excuse us for wrongdoing, for it is in itself often a great sin. Let us, then, say with the Royal Prophet: "Give me understanding and I will search Thy Law." "Oh, Lord, my portion, I have said I would keep Thy Law" (*Ps.* cxviii.). Yes, this is our task here below; once we know and fully understand God's commandments we shall love them and will cry out: "The Law of the Lord is unspotted, con-

verting souls. . . . The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes" (*Ps.* xviii.). The Law of God is indeed a bright light in the darkness of this world, illuminating and consoling us, and having once come to love it we will follow it and never forsake it. "The cords of the wicked have encompassed me, but I have not forgotten Thy Law" (*Ps.* cxviii.); for to understand and love and fulfill the Law of God is consolation and peace. Amen.

SERMON II

On the Love of God

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart" (*Mark* xii. 30).

IT IS right and fitting that our meditations on the commandments should begin with that commandment which is the greatest of them all. It embraces the three duties of man: to love God, to love his neighbor, and to love himself. The love of God being our primary obligation, we will, with the help of the Holy Ghost, consider it to-day, briefly but devoutly, under the three following heads:

I. The meaning.
II. The characteristics.
III. The motives of the love of God.

I

With regard to man's love for God the catechism tells us "that we should love God above all things for His own sake," and further goes on to explain that "we offend against the love of God by all sin, but particularly by mortal sin."

Now what does love for a person mean? It means that a man wishes well and does good, as far as he can, to the one he loves; that he rejoices when good things come to him, and is sad when he is hurt or when evil befalls him. It is obvious that love can not exist without sympathy of this kind. If we apply these tests to the love of God

we shall find that a man who loves God truly will wish Him to be praised and glorified and will rejoice when this happens; that he will be grieved to see God insulted and blasphemed and will try with all his strength to do God's will, rejoicing in the contemplation of His infinite perfections. Such is the meaning of love of God.

We are not, however, commanded only to love God, but to love Him above all things—"with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with all thy strength." This means that the love of God must be uppermost in our hearts, surpassing every other kind of love. Many may think that if such is the case they do not yet love God truly, for they feel that they are bound by much stronger ties to some fellow-creature, or to some one of their possessions. That may be so, but when we come to analyze love closely we find that it is not a question of feelings, but of will. Suppose that you were given your choice between enduring a severe toothache for a whole day and losing your sight; you would surely choose the toothache, for although it would cause you to *feel* far greater pain, yet blindness is a much greater evil than toothache.

Take another case. A father has two sons: one, by his abilities, his position, and his earnings, is the hope and support of the whole family. The other is weak and sickly, but so lovable as to be the special joy and delight of them all. This father is called upon to decide which of his two sons he will give up. How would he decide? The loss of the second son would certainly cause him more pain and grief, but that of the elder would

ruin the entire family. Therefore, the father would give up the younger son and keep the elder. You see now how we can ascertain if the love of God is uppermost in our hearts. It is so if we are prepared to forfeit everything rather than separate ourselves from God. The martyrs were really put to this test and they elected to sacrifice wife and children, kith and kin, all their possessions, and even life itself rather than offend God grievously by denying their faith. We ourselves shall one day be put to our trial; perhaps we already find ourselves face to face with it. Which do you love best: the unlawful things to be obtained through grievous sin, or God? The pleasures of evil-doing, or God? Earth, or heaven? This world, or the next? By your choice you will see whether you love God above all things. "Oh, Lord, God of hosts, who is like unto Thee?" Who would hesitate or even pause for a moment if it came to a choice between God, the highest good, the source of all good, the essence of all perfection, and some one of His creatures, which is only to be obtained and enjoyed by offending Him? It is surely not difficult to choose between pure gold and worthless tinsel.

II

Having made the meaning of the commandment clear we will now consider the characteristics by which a genuine love of God is recognizable. Love dwells in the heart; one can not judge from a man's appearance or by his face whether he loves God or not. We are hardly able to assert it of ourselves. Many who appear to be deeply moved

and to be full of tender emotions have really no love of God in their hearts, and others who feel nothing of it in reality possess it. How can we know, then, if we love Him? Our Lord Himself has given us a sign: "He who hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is who loves Me." He has likened the love of God to a fire. "I am come to send fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?" What a beautiful and striking simile! Now since the love of God has been likened to fire, let us ask, how does one distinguish real fire from the semblance of it? Real burning fire is never idle; it is always active, exerting its power upon everything that it meets. The earth is solid under our feet; water in a lake or pond lies still and stagnant; the air at times seems scarcely to stir or breathe, but fire is never quiet. It consumes wood, melts iron, converts water into steam; even the wind only serves to heighten its flames. "Fire never saith: it is enough." Its whole essence is restless activity. Well, we shall find these same characteristics in the love of God, which consists not in idle sentiments or high-flown phrases, but which is real only in so far as it is active. Love will keep the commandments of God, overcoming temptation; it will suppress sinful inclinations and passions, and be ever ready to make sacrifices, to endure suffering, to work and labor day by day for God's sake.

Patient endurance of suffering is indeed one very marked sign of the love of God. A pitcher and a wicker-basket will both, so long as they are under the surface, be full of water; but when they are drawn out the basket will be empty though

the pitcher is still full. It is easy in times of happiness and good health to say: "I love God with my whole heart," but it is in the day of suffering, in old age, poverty, and want that we can give real proof of the love of God: "Charity beareth all things, . . . endureth all things" (1 *Cor.* xiii. 7). When we have no love for God we approach suffering in a very different spirit.

It was in the time of persecution and banishment, in sickness, old age, poverty, and blindness that the love of God was strongest in Tobias. So it was with Job. Our Lord Himself at the beginning of His passion said to His apostles: "Arise, let us go, that the world may know that I have loved the Father." He meant that His patient endurance of suffering would be a proof to the world of His love for His Father in heaven. Mere dead logs of wood float down stream, but to swim against the tide implies life and active exertion. It is easy to serve God in happiness, but only true love can resign itself to suffer for Him.

III

Finally, we will ask ourselves for what reason we should love God? The catechism tells us that "God is all just, all holy, all merciful, as He is infinitely perfect." In accordance with this we can also say that our love of God may be founded on His words, or His works, as well as on His own infinitely perfect being. We can kindle the love of God in our hearts by thinking of His words to us, words in which He commands us to love Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole

heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with all thy strength." Nothing could be more clearly expressed than this commandment; He is our Master who has the right to command and we are His servants who must obey. The words in which He has promised His reward may also incite us to love God: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God has prepared"—for whom?—"for them that love Him."

If this promise does not stimulate us let us turn to the threats contained in Holy Scripture. "He who loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." "He who loveth not, abideth in death." So we find in God's words, as it were, a triple spark, commanding, promising, and threatening, which should help to kindle in our hearts the fire of His love.

It is even easier to love Him by meditating on His works, for they are every one the outcome of the Divine Love, and demonstrate the length and breadth and height and depth of God's love for us. The length! How long has He loved us? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Before we were born, before the world existed, from the beginning of eternity He loved us. It is equally impossible to measure the length of His love for us with regard to the future; it will last forever. Surely, we cannot refuse to love God during the short term of our lives here, seeing that this is the only way in which we can make ourselves worthy of Him for all eternity.

The breadth! God's love extends over all His

creatures. "Thou lovest all and Thou hatest nothing that Thou hast made," and this love embraces us, too.

The height! We may understand by this the excellence and value of the gifts we have received from God's love. In Paradise there were four rivers which watered the whole earth. From God's love—from His sacred Heart—spring forth four streams to enrich His creatures. The first brings the gift of being, for mere existence is in itself a gift. The second stream gives life to all living creatures, who thus are placed on a far higher plane than any form of inanimate creation. The third stream gives five senses to sensitive beings, and the fourth endows all rational creatures with an immortal soul and a spiritual life. It is to this class that we belong, and to this height God has raised us by His love. There is also a four-fold stream of supernatural gifts which flows over us, so to speak, and which should bear us along with it to the love of God. The first gives us sanctifying grace, which makes us children of God and like to Him; the second brought us the Incarnation, when the Son of God assumed our human nature; the third is that Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in which we partake of His flesh and blood; and the fourth stream will bring us the glory of heaven where we shall be partakers in the beatitude of God Himself.

The depth! In order to give us these graces the Son of God lowered Himself to servitude, to the crib, and the cross, enduring the sting of death. Oh, the length and breadth and height

and depth of God's love for man! Who would not strive to make Him some return?

But the highest of all reasons for the love of God lies in His own most perfect nature. If we consider closely what love is we shall find that we bestow it only upon things that are good, or that appear to us to be so, and their very goodness constitutes the reason of our love. It follows that the more good there is in anything, the more we love it, and, therefore, we should love above all things Him whom we know to be the Highest Good. Truth is good and it is right we should love it; wisdom, knowledge, strength, might, beauty, everything from which good comes, is good. They are all lovable; but so much the more is God lovable because He is absolute truth, substantial wisdom, infinite strength, and unspeakable beauty. From Him and in Him and through Him is everything that can be called good—and He Himself is the greatest of all goods. We may say that He alone knows the extent of His own goodness, and He only can really know how much we ought to love Him.

Everything, then, leads us to love God: His words and His works, His nature, His promises and threats, His goodness to us, past, present, and to come, His love for us and the benefits and graces which have flowed to us from it. How cold and indifferent our hearts must be if such thoughts have no power to inflame them! Let us resolve now to love God as far as possible, because He is the Supreme Good; this is perfect love. If we are not yet so advanced as to be able to do that, then let us love Him because He has been,

and is now, and will continue to be so good to us; this is imperfect love. Oh, Lord, send the fire of Thy love into our hearts; grant us to increase and persevere in it, and so gain the reward of love, which is Thyself, for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON III

On the Love of Our Neighbor

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (*Matt.* xxii. 39).

THE chief commandment comprises three duties: To love God, to love our neighbor, and to love ourselves. Last Sunday we considered the meaning, the characteristics, and the motives of the love of God; we will now proceed to consider what love of our neighbor means, asking ourselves:

I. Who is our neighbor?
II. Why we should love him?

In other words, we will endeavor to make clear in what love of our neighbor consists, and what reasons we have for loving him.

I

First, then, who is our neighbor? Jesus Christ has told us that every man is our neighbor, and this is the teaching of the Christian religion. We have learned this as children, and so familiar has it become to us since then, and so entirely does it commend itself to our common sense, reason, and right feeling that we find it hard to believe there could be, or ever has been, any other answer to such a question. "Every man is our neighbor." That certainly is the answer of Christianity. But the reply of Paganism and of those who refuse to recognize Christianity is very different. Did the heathens regard their slaves as their neigh-

bors? No, indeed; they considered a slave as a thing to be bought and sold, given away, retained, or rejected; as an animal to be used by his master as best pleased him; beaten, tortured, or killed at his pleasure; as a brute creature, to be fed only so long as it could work; to be driven away or killed when it became old, ill, useless, and of no value. The heathens looked upon their slaves in this way for hundreds, even thousands of years. This was the state of affairs in bygone ages amongst heathen peoples, even those who had progressed far in art and learning, and so it is amongst heathen races to-day. It is estimated that even in the most enlightened pagan races two-thirds of the people passed their lives in slavery. How much, then, does humanity owe to Jesus Christ and His Church for establishing the principle: "Every man is our neighbor"? Who knows but that without Christ and His Church we might not ourselves have been born slaves, spending our whole lives in the miserable position of mere chattels, valuable or worthless in our master's eyes according to the work we did for him? Did the heathens regard even their helpless children as their neighbors? They destroyed them if they were weakly or deformed, or when they became too numerous. In China to this day they are thrown to unclean animals. Did conquerors in war regard their vanquished foes and their prisoners as neighbors? Alas, no! They saw in them only creatures on whom to vent all their feelings of revenge and scorn and cruelty, reducing them to slavery, slaughtering them as sacrifices to the gods, putting them to death, or at best

giving them opportunities of ending their lives for themselves. Were women treated by pagans as their neighbors? By no means: one can picture the miserable condition of women in pagan times, where everything was allowed to man, but forbidden to woman, where polygamy was almost universal and the tie of wedlock without binding force. But in these days no one denies the value of the beautiful maxim: "Every man is our neighbor." As in the days of paganism, so we see here, now, that the more man turns away from Christ and His teaching the more also does he incline to abolish the old principle of brotherly love. Not long ago a certain writer was buried—I mean Nietzsche. He died mad, but his writings were devoured eagerly and hailed as having reached the very acme of culture. And what was his teaching? That the old tables of stone, by which he meant the ten commandments, ought to be broken; that if mankind wished to advance those who were distinguished in learning and art or who possessed knowledge or power greater than other men should on no account trouble themselves to assist their weaker brethren, but should go forward and if necessary trample on them ruthlessly. Those are the true "Übermenschen," the true heroes, who take no account of the poor and lowly, with their needs and their misery. Yet the newspapers at the time of his death rang with praises of this pessimist philosopher.

It was in truth a new commandment that our Saviour gave the world when He taught that we must love our neighbor as ourself, and that every man is our neighbor—not only the rich, but the

poor, not only our fellow-countrymen, but strangers, the slave as well as the free, the weak as well as the strong, the victor and the vanquished, the ignorant and savage, as well as the learned and civilized. "There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Gal.* iii. 28). One can say truly of our Saviour's teaching that it has renewed the face of the earth. "Every man is our neighbor." That is the true meaning of brotherly love.

II

We now come to the reasons for loving our neighbor. We should love our neighbor: 1. Because God has commanded us to do so. 2. Because Christ has taught us to do so by His example. 3. Because every man is made in the image of God, is redeemed by Christ's precious blood, and is called to everlasting happiness.

The first reason for loving our neighbor is because we are expressly commanded by God to do so. When God commands anything it is not for us to ask whether it be easy or difficult, pleasant or disagreeable; we have simply to obey. He is the Lord of all, who has a right to command, and we are His servants who must obey Him. It is the most simple of all relationships. And in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, He says to us: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." God is here not merely expressing a wish or giving us advice. He commands—"Thou shalt." All the commandments begin with those words, "Thou shalt," showing that they are clearly com-

mandments or laws; and this one of which we are speaking is repeated many times over and emphasized by our Saviour. He said of our duty to love God: "This is the greatest and first commandment," and of our obligations toward our neighbor: "And the second is like unto it." Therefore it stands neither higher nor lower than the command to love God; it is also the greatest and the first commandment. Our Lord called it His own commandment, and on another occasion He spoke of it as a new commandment; finally, it is the commandment which our Saviour impressed upon His apostles on the night before His passion. "How," asks St. Augustine in this connection, "could children forget the injunctions of their dying father?"

2. Another reason is to be found in the example set us by our Saviour when He became man and made Himself one of our race, our brother, our neighbor. Look and see if love of His neighbor did not glow in His heart, and whether His life was not full of works of true charity. That unspeakable love which God has for men burns also in the heart of Jesus, which is indeed the heart of the Son of God. How can we doubt His love? Love shows itself in pity and sympathy with the sufferings of all men; was there any human suffering with which Our Saviour did not sympathize? "I have compassion on the multitude." But His Heart was not satisfied with feelings of pity; He performed numberless acts of love and mercy. Go through the corporal and all the spiritual works of mercy and you will find that Our Lord practised them all. It was not enough for

Him to show love to the men who were His contemporaries; He cared also for future generations. Not only did He dispense favors of a temporal and earthly nature, He distributed also spiritual graces. He was not satisfied with loving His brethren Himself; He kindled love in the hearts of His representatives; He worked and suffered, lived and died for others. And this not only for His friends, but also for sinners and those who were His enemies. He loved us one and all. What better model can we Christians want than Jesus Christ, our Master, our Father, and our Brother?

3. The last reason for loving our neighbor will be found in our neighbor himself. Study him, whoever He may be, and you can not fail to find that he is worthy of your love. In the first place, he is made in the likeness of God. "The soul is a spirit that will never die, and has understanding and free will." When the young Tobias came to Raguel, the cousin of his father, Raguel had never seen him; he did not know who he was. Nevertheless, he greeted him kindly. Why? He saw in him a likeness to the old Tobias whom he knew and held in deep respect. "How like is this young man," he said to his wife, "to my cousin." Then when he heard that the youth was the son of Tobias his joy knew no bounds. With tears of joy he embraced and kissed him: "A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous man." He loved the young Tobias although he knew nothing of him except that he was the son of his father, and bore a great likeness to him. Is it not reason enough for us, too, to love our neighbor, that we know him

to be made in the likeness of God, who created him and us, and who is his Father and ours? A blessing be upon thee, my brother, because thou art a creature of the almighty and most holy God!

Again, when we consider our neighbor in the light of faith, we find other points of resemblance between us. He, as well as we, has been redeemed by Christ's precious blood. How should he who is worthy of Christ's love be unworthy of ours? Since Christ offered up His life for him shall we not also love him?

Finally, he is called, like us, to everlasting blessedness. When emigrants on a ship bound for America come together and find that they are from the same country and traveling to the same State, perhaps even to the same town, they are drawn toward one another. They talk over their past and discuss their future prospects; they confide their hopes and fears and plans to each other; they help each other in word and deed, by advice and often with money. Why? Because they are fellow-travelers, making for the same goal, prospective citizens of the same city. Well, now, are not we and our neighbor also making for the same goal? Must we not also travel the same way through the toil and troubles and sufferings and temptations of this world? Shall we not also love one another, as children of the same Father, as brothers of our Redeemer, as future fellow-countrymen in our heavenly home?

Certainly, there are reasons in plenty for loving our neighbor: God's clear command, the shining example of Jesus Christ, our neighbor

himself who is made in God's likeness, redeemed by Christ, and destined for heaven, as we are.

The early Christians showed great zeal in obeying this commandment, so that the Jews were astonished at their love for one another. They fulfilled Our Lord's words: "By this shall men know that you are My disciples, that ye love one another." But do we always act up to this nowadays? Might it not sometimes justly be said: "See how they hate and persecute one another." We are apt to search our hearts for signs of our love for God. Well, the simplest proof of it is love of our neighbor. "If any man say I love God, and hateth his neighbor, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (1 *John* iv. 20.) "And if there be any other commandment," says St. Paul, "it is comprised in this word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (*Rom.* xiii. 9). Amen.

SERMON IV

On Loving Our Enemies

"Love your enemies" (*Matt.* v. 44).

LAST Sunday we saw that every man is our neighbor, and, further, we considered the reasons for practising brotherly love, or charity: because God has commanded it; because Christ has set us the example; and because every man is a likeness of God, redeemed by Christ's precious blood, and destined, like ourselves, for heaven.

This love for our neighbor must have certain qualities. It must be

I. True.
II. Unselfish.
III. Universal.

With the help of the Holy Ghost we will to-day consider briefly these three characteristics.

I

Our love for our neighbor must be true. When can we say that a wall, for instance, stands true? When every part of it, from top to bottom, is in a straight and perpendicular line. Under what conditions can our love for our neighbor be considered true? When, founded and established in the heart, it shows itself in words, but, most of all, in deeds of charity; our love of our neighbor is true when heart and mouth and hand are all in harmony and run together, as it were, in one straight line. When some trouble befalls your

neighbor you may say, "I am extremely sorry," and in your heart perhaps you are thinking, "It serves him right; he deserves it." Is that charity? No, it is only a simulation of it. Your heart and mouth are not in agreement; you wish your friend health and prosperity with fine words and in your heart you are saying: "I don't really care if he breaks his neck." That is hypocritical charity, and so it is also when our hearts and our words are full of love, but we neglect to give effect to this love in deeds. You witness the bodily or mental suffering of your neighbor; you sympathize with him in kindly speeches, but you do not lift a finger to help, although you are well able to do so. Perhaps you even go the length of saying you would gladly help if you could, but, although you are begged to do so, and in spite of the fact that the unhappy man may even be closely related to you, you do not stir hand or foot. "Let us not love in word nor in tongue," says St. John, "but in deed and in truth" (1 *John* iii. 18). Our love of our neighbor, therefore, may be said to be true when heart and mouth and hand all concur—and play an equal part in it.

II

Moreover, our love of one another should be unselfish. What is a selfish man? Surely one who is always seeking his own advantage and gain. Therefore were a man to perform kind acts, and give alms in order to earn for himself the name of being open-handed and kind-hearted, hoping thereby to advance himself in some way and to get back doubled or trebled what he has given,

his charity would be love of himself and not of his neighbor—selfishness clothed in the garments of charity. Sailors despise nothing so much as a ship sailing under false colors. Such were the methods of the Pharisees: "And all their works they do, for to be seen of men" (*Matt.* xxiii. 5); "They have received their reward" (*Matt.* vi. 5).

Therefore charity, to be unselfish, must be without thought of worldly gain or advantage. This is not saying, however, that we must not think of the everlasting reward in heaven, for which, on the contrary, we should long and strive. I am well aware that many clever men have said that charity, to be high and pure, must be without thought even of the reward of heaven. They are absolutely wrong, however, for who was it who promised the certainty of a great and everlasting reward to the charitable? It was Jesus Christ. Would He have told us of this reward unless He meant us to desire it and think of it while performing our acts of charity? The holiest men and women, patterns of true charity, have kept the thought of this reward before them, and the hope of it has given them courage and strength to undertake and persevere in efforts of charity of the most difficult and wearisome nature. Without such a reward to look to, who would be found ready to engage in work of a character repugnant to human nature, which often meets only with ingratitude here below?

III

We have explained briefly what makes charity true and unselfish; its third characteristic will oc-

cupy us rather longer. It must be universal. This means that no human being, be he friend or foe, must be shut out from our love. It is not, of course, intended that we should love all men in the same degree. Charity may and should begin at home, with those nearest to us, our parents, children, husband or wife, our relations, friends, and neighbors, our fellow-countrymen and our co-religionists. Those who are nearest the sun feel its warmth most. But, although there may be differences in our love, yet no mountain should be so high, no river so wide, no sea so deep, no difference of speech or religion, or education or position so great as to shut out any human being from our charity. We must love all mankind. But how is that possible? It is very simple. Do we not pray for all: "Give us this day our daily bread," "Forgive us our trespasses," etc. Alms were sent not long ago to the famine-stricken people of India and Africa, and to the victims of the earthquake in Italy. In these days of easy communication we are not limited to cultivating a love for our neighbor in our hearts, we have every opportunity of showing it also by our deeds.

Our charity must be universal; it must include every one. Most people will readily agree to this principle, it sounds so human and easy to grasp; but they set a limit to it, and when it oversteps that limit they cry, "Stop! If our love is to be universal we must not withhold it even from our enemies; we must love them, too." "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in

heaven, who maketh the sun to shine upon the good and bad and raineth upon the just and the unjust." Those are our Saviour's words and they admit of no misinterpretation.

When we consider this commandment we find that it means first of all that we must not revenge ourselves upon our enemies, nor even attempt or wish for revenge, for revenge is in direct contradiction to love for our neighbor. But, more than that, it implies that we are required also to love our enemies, to wish them well, and when occasion arises to do good to them: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, do good to them that persecute and calumniate you."

There are many Christians who do not take vengeance upon their neighbors, because they either dare not, or they have no opportunity for it, or because they are in a position where it would be unbecoming to do so; and so they think they comply with God's commands. "I do my enemy no harm," they say. "I am very glad if things go well with him; but I can't bear the sight of him; I can't endure his company, and it is impossible to be on friendly terms." Do you call that loving your enemy? Can you not bear the sight of those whom you love? If you can not endure his presence, if you can not be friendly with him, then you do not truly love him and you are not fulfilling God's command to "love your enemies."

No one can be exempted from keeping this commandment. What have you to urge against the observance of it? "Oh, it is so difficult to love one's enemies!" Did our Saviour say that it

was easy? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm." "Oh, but the injury he has done me," you say, "is no small matter. He has destroyed my good name by his spiteful tongue. He has hindered me from earning my bread. He has wounded me to the quick." Perhaps things are not quite so bad as you make out, but, if they should be, then you have indeed a malicious enemy; but there can be no doubt that he is your enemy and, as such, you are bound to love him. To love one's benefactors and relations is easy. The heathens even do that. But to love one's enemies is Christ-like. "Certainly it is beautiful to love one's enemies," you answer, "and I admire those who succeed in doing so, but it is beyond my power." I would answer: "You are not expected to attain to this by your own power, but with the help of God's grace, which He never refuses to those who ask for it."

Perhaps you think it would be easier to succeed if some one would show you the way to do it. Then turn to the example of Jesus Christ, the author of this commandment. Contemplate our Saviour on the Cross. Look at His wounds, at His sacred countenance, disfigured and covered with spittle! He is suffering and dying with words of scorn ringing in His ears, and while His enemies rejoice before His very eyes! The wounds that they gave Him are bleeding. He opens His mouth and what are His first words? A prayer. For whom? A prayer for His enemies, to His Father; He prays aloud so that His enemies may know that He loves them. His prayer is coupled with the only possible excuse for them, "Father,

forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, Lord and Saviour, can any one call himself a Christian and a follower of Thine and yet hate his enemies! Moreover, we all know that numbers of holy people have succeeded in imitating His divine example!

This law of God, that we must love our enemies, is altogether just. God also has His enemies. How many there are who blaspheme His holy name and trample His commandments underfoot; who resist the Church which He founded, and the authority which she exercises in His name; who fight against the truth, who violate the sacraments which He instituted for the redemption of men; who misuse His works and reject His graces! Offenses such as these are innumerable, and He does not revenge Himself although He has power to do so. Who could stay His arm if at the first offense He chose to punish such offenders, as their sin deserves? Is He not able to do so? He does not do it. He continues to offer them benefits, and distributes His graces only the more widely, ever ready to grant forgiveness so long as man is on earth. Has not such a God, who has Himself so many times forgiven such grievous offenses, the right to expect of us that we also should forgive our enemies? "Shouldst thou not have had compassion upon thy fellow-servant, as I also had compassion upon thee?"

And do not we ourselves also belong to the number of those who have offended, and still offend, God? What injury have our enemies done to us compared to the sins we have committed against God? God realizes this better than we

can. "Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you." Has He not the right to expect that we will forgive our enemies everything, since He has forgiven us so much and we are still continually in need of His forgiveness? It is but just. "Forgive us our trespasses as we also forgive them that trespass against us"—we say this daily. God will forgive us as we also forgive others. What? How do you forgive them? Ask your own heart; what does it say? "Oh, if I had only a chance of avenging myself! I will pay him out as soon and as fully as I can!" Oh, God, then what do you mean when you pray "Forgive us, etc."? You mean: "Do not forgive me, as I also do not forgive. Punish me; take vengeance on me." And if you say in your heart: "I will not revenge myself on my enemy, but I can't bear the sight of him, I can't be friendly with him, I can't endure his presence," then your prayer, "Forgive us, etc." must mean this: That God is to forgive you, but to put you out of His mind, no longer be kind to you, and not admit you to His presence in heaven. "So will My heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Do you wish that? God forbid! What you wish is that He should forgive you, load you with His graces, love you, and admit you to His presence forever. Is this not so? Very well, then, if you wish to attain this you must forgive your enemies from your heart. "Forgive and it shall be forgiven you." Amen.

SERMON V

On Almsgiving

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (*Matt.* v. 7).

CHARITY, as we have seen, must have three special characteristics: it must be true, unselfish, and universal. Moreover, it is to be particularly borne in mind that it is to include even our enemies. But, although even our enemies are not to be excluded from our love, Holy Scripture recommends in a very special way to our charity the poor, the widow, the orphan, and all who are in any spiritual or bodily need. We can come to their assistance by the exercise of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. There are seven corporal works of mercy: 1. To feed the hungry. 2. To give drink to the thirsty. 3. To clothe the naked. 4. To harbor the harborless. 5. To visit the sick. 6. To visit the imprisoned. 7. To bury the dead. These works are all directed to supplying the material needs of our neighbor and mitigating his bodily sufferings, and for this reason they are called the corporal works of mercy. There are also seven spiritual works of mercy: 1. To convert the sinner. 2. To instruct the ignorant. 3. To counsel the doubtful. 4. To comfort the sorrowful. 5. To bear wrongs patiently. 6. To forgive injuries. 7. To pray for the living and the dead. These are called the spiritual works of mercy because their object is to relieve or re-

move altogether the spiritual needs of our neighbor. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy may be classed together under the one name of almsgiving, for alms can be either of a corporal or a spiritual kind.

Not only are we advised to give alms, we are, in addition, *commanded* to do so, and I propose that we shall make our meditation to-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, on those two points.

I

The law of almsgiving is deeply rooted in the human heart and makes itself felt by inclining men in all times and all places to come to the help of their suffering fellow-creatures. It is like a voice speaking within us, calling us to have pity on misery and sorrow, to praise acts of kindness, and to condemn want of feeling and hardness of heart. For this reason we find that the works of mercy are practised not only by Christians and members of the Catholic Church, but by all mankind.

This law of almsgiving, as we may call it, is clearly laid down both in the Old Testament and the New.

In the Old Testament God says, "I command thee"—note the command—"to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother that liveth in the land."

In the New Testament this command is most clearly expressed by our Saviour. To prove it I will remind you of some incidents in Our Lord's life which will convince you that the matter of almsgiving is not left to our own option or choice,

but is an urgent duty imposed upon us, which under some circumstances it would be grievous sin to neglect. Our Lord was invited to a dinner by a certain Pharisee. As they sat at table the Pharisee, who attached great weight to such things, wondered to himself because our Saviour had neglected the usual ablutions before dinner. Our Saviour knew his thought and answered it by telling him that purity within was more important than outward cleanliness, and He added: "But yet that which remaineth, give alms, and behold all things are clean unto you." He meant that the law of charity and almsgiving was of greater importance than all the rules and regulations concerning cleanliness, and that the fulfilling of the law of almsgiving has power to purify. Therefore, it is clear such a law exists. And is it binding? It is indeed. So much so that those who break it sin grievously and deserve eternal punishment. This can be very easily proved. Do you remember the parable of Dives and Lazarus? What was the ultimate fate of these two men? The poor man died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried in hell. Our Saviour said so Himself. But let us find the reason why he was buried in hell. He did not scoff at religion, nor was he a swindler, nor a usurer, nor an adulterer. Holy Scripture does not say any of these things about him. Then what was his crime? We read that he clothed himself in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. He *may* have sinned in that way, but we are not *told* that he was guilty of any excess in food or drink. Then

why was he buried in hell? Because he refused to give alms to Lazarus. Lazarus was a beggar, sick and covered with sores; he lay at the gate of the rich man, who must have seen him every day as he went in and out. Lazarus, moreover, was a humble soul who would have been thankful for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Our Saviour draws a striking contrast between the two men, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man paraded his opulence in every possible way, in the garments he wore and the meals at which he feasted. The other was exceedingly poor and miserable, and yet the rich man denied him the alms which he could easily have given—and was buried in hell. Not on account of his costly garments or his sumptuous feasts, but because of his hardness of heart toward the poor beggar.

From our Saviour's parable it is clear that a rich man who refuses to give alms out of the abundance of his wealth to those who are in sore need of it commits a grievous sin. Now, you may say to yourselves: "But it is not easy to say what is abundant wealth, or to distinguish between extravagance and justifiable expenditure." That is true. "Nor is it always easy," you continue, "to be sure that a person is in extreme want." I admit that also. "Therefore," you conclude, "it is not always easy to say whether a man, in refusing alms, is committing a grave sin." That is certainly true, but it is also certain that there may be and are cases where a man sins grievously by refusing to give alms, and those who would wish to guard themselves against such sins would

do well to give too much in charity rather than risk giving too little.

If this parable does not convince you, recall to your minds the words of condemnation which our Saviour will speak at the last judgment. What will the Judge say to those who stand on His left hand? "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Why? "For I was hungry and you gave me not to eat; thirsty and you gave me not to drink," etc. "As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me." They will be punished forever, because they neglected to do works of mercy. Who better than the Judge Himself can know what sins will cut us off from eternal life? How, then, can we continue to doubt that hardness of heart toward the poor will deprive us of life everlasting?

One thing is very striking in these words of condemnation. Hardness of heart and want of charity is the only offense spoken of as deserving damnation. Will no other class of sinner, then, be lost forever? No thief, murderer or blasphemer, adulterer or unchaste person? Why are such sins as these not spoken of as deserving condemnation? Our Saviour only gave us a few examples. The sentence will be pronounced against every kind of sin; but it may be that He specially mentioned this sin of hard-heartedness that, by doing so, there might be no room for doubt. Why did He select this particular sin as an example? Perhaps because the others being more obviously wrong and sinful He wished to emphasize and draw our attention to the wickedness of shutting our hearts to the needs of the poor. It is not to

be wondered at that want of pity for the poor should be punished with such severity, for the unmerciful sin not only against the poor themselves, but against God and His Providence. Providence has distributed the good things of this world unequally among men, not in order that some should have everything and others nothing, that some may live in luxury and be treated as spoiled children whilst their less fortunate brethren starve and are looked upon as outcasts; that certainly was not God's scheme. He allowed this unequal distribution of wealth that it might be a help to salvation both for the rich and the poor; that the poor might learn to practise humility and, bearing their poverty with patience, receive thankfully what is given them; while the rich, on their side, might look upon themselves merely as the stewards and dispensers of their riches, sharing and dividing them generously with the poor. In this way God's plan will be justified. But when the rich refuse to give alms they are not only responsible for the sufferings of the poor, but they are also accountable for the mistrust of God's Providence, and for the despair and blasphemy which the cruelty of men sometimes engenders in the hearts of those who find themselves needy and friendless in this world.

II

Now many of you may say to me: "All this does not apply to us; though not by any means poor, yet our income is not such as to leave us anything superfluous." Even supposing this to be true, I still say to you, "Give alms." Tobias, the

elder, said to his son: "If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little." This is not only a strict law, but it is also very good advice, for the advantages of almsgiving in this world are many. I repeat, the advantages in this world. There is a blessing promised to almsgiving even here below; it invariably returns to the giver, and has never ruined any one. Almsgiving will never impoverish you; moreover, Holy Scripture tells us that "he who giveth to the poor shall not want," and that God will repay him even in this life, for "He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." Is it not a grand thought that we can make God our debtor? He will give us back capital with interest ten times over. He can find thousands of ways in which to repay us even in this life; by blessing us with good health, keeping us from misfortunes, giving us good children, and filling them with the spirit of moderation, industry, and obedience.

But the promise of eternal life, held out to the merciful, is the chief thing that should lead us to practise almsgiving. The rich have in their hands an easy means of attaining it, if they would only realize their power. Some souls must win their way to heaven by pouring out their life-blood, as the holy martyrs did; others find it by means of hard and weary toil; others again by the innocence of their lives, or by the earnestness of their repentance, or the patient endurance of poverty. Which way have you chosen? Perhaps you say, "None of these ways is for me." Then give to the poor with open hands and you will not lose

your reward. "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." These are our Saviour's own words to His disciples after telling them the parable of the unjust steward. Let me explain what He meant. The steward knew that his stewardship was about to be taken from him. He profited by the time that was left to him, and used his master's property, over which he still had control, to make friends for the future when he should be steward no longer. We should do likewise. We hold our worldly goods only as stewards; at death our stewardship will be taken from us and we shall have to render an account. Therefore, we should make to ourselves friends through our worldly goods, that is to say, we should give alms, so that we may be received hereafter into everlasting dwellings. "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." Amen.

SERMON VI

On the Ten Commandments

"His will is in the law of the Lord and on His Law he shall meditate day and night" (*Ps.* i. 2).

THE "first and the greatest" commandment lays upon us, as we have already said, three duties: to love God, to love our neighbor, and to love ourselves. We have already considered as fully as possible in what love for God and for our neighbor consists. But we are further commanded to love ourselves; and this love of ourselves forms the standard by which our love for our neighbor will be measured.

Now it is easy to love one's self; we may say that all men love themselves and would do so even if it were not commanded; therefore it really becomes a question of the way in which we fulfil the commandment. In what does true love of self consist? Christian self-love consists of being solicitous above all things for the salvation of our soul. This is perfectly comprehensible to the mind of any Christian who knows that he is immortal, and who believes in heaven and hell and in an everlasting reward. Any one who loves himself must above all care for the welfare of his soul. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (*Matt.* xvi. 26.)

Zeal for the salvation of his soul in no way prohibits a Christian from caring also about

health, success, honor, and earthly happiness, but only within certain limits which he must be careful not to overstep.

1. His solicitude for the things of this world must not interfere with his efforts to save his soul: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you." Many people behave as though it were the other way about—Seek ye first the good things of the earth and the kingdom of God shall be added unto you.

2. Love of self must not prevent our love of God, and

3. It must not be so great as to cause us to fail in love or justice toward our neighbor.

This would complete the necessary explanations of the "greatest and the first commandment," which contains in itself the whole law of God. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." But every law requires to be expounded, and the shorter the law the more necessary is some exposition of it. This first commandment is very brief and we must look for a more complete development of its meaning and of the numerous duties which it entails upon us, and this we find in the ten commandments which God gave to the Israelites on Mount Sinai.

Our instructions have now brought us to the threshold of the ten commandments. But before we begin to consider them separately, we have still, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to answer the three following introductory questions:

I. Where were the ten commandments given?
II. By whom and how were they given?
III. To whom were they given?

I

Where were the ten commandments given? On Mount Sinai. Where is this Mount Sinai? The continents of Africa and Asia are joined at one place by an isthmus, and south of this isthmus flows a narrow sea called the Red Sea, which separates for a long distance the coasts of the two continents. The Red Sea, when it reaches the shores of the isthmus, divides into two narrow arms of water, between which lies the peninsula called Sinai, which takes its name from the mountain range rising to the south, the central peak of which is called Mount Sinai. The mountain range forms an extensive tableland, where the whole people of Israel could be easily assembled. Sinai rises almost perpendicularly out of the plain like a wall of rock, and stands 7000 feet above sea level and 1800 feet above the level of the tableland. Before the traveler reaches the tableland he comes to two doorways. In olden days the pilgrims who intended to ascend Mount Sinai were here reminded of David's words: "Who will ascend the mountain of the Lord; who will stand in His holy place?" At the first doorway they found a priest waiting to hear confessions, and those who refused to confess were not allowed to pass through the second doorway.

When the Israelites, after years of servitude, came out of Egypt they were led by Moses and Aaron through the Red Sea; that is to say, they

came across the western branch of that sea and landed on the Sinai peninsula. On the third day of the third month they reached the mount, and in this holy place, wonderful in its solitude, God made known His Law to His people.

II

Who gave the Law to the people of Israel, and how was it given to them? God gave the law, and in such a way and under circumstances that proved that He Himself was the Author of it.

Moses prepared the people for the reception of the Law. He required them to wash their garments as a symbol of the purity of heart with which we ought to listen to the word of God. For, if it was considered necessary for them to purify their garments before hearing the divine word, how much more important that they should bring to it cleanness of heart, without which no one is capable of receiving or understanding it. Furthermore, barriers were built round the holy mount so that no one might ascend or even touch it.

On the morning of the third day a great storm of thunder and lightning arose. A heavy cloud hung over the mountain top; the sound of trumpets grew louder and louder, the whole mountain became enveloped in smoke, for the Lord had come, accompanied by fire, and surrounded by His holy angels. The smoke poured out as from a furnace, concealing the entire mountain in its fumes. The earth quaked and Moses was filled with fear, and all the people who had followed him to the foot of the mountain trembled in great terror. In the midst of these wonderful phenomena of nature,

while the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed, and the mountain trembled and glowed and poured forth smoke, and the hearts of the people were almost paralyzed with fear, the voice of God was heard rising above the thunder and speaking out of the mysterious cloud: "I am the Lord thy God." What was the purpose of all these preparations? Why the thunder and lightning, the fire and cloud and earthquake? To proclaim to the people: "I am the Lord thy God," the Creator of heaven and earth, who controls the elements! The Lord thy God who can command thee and whom thou must obey; who will reward those who fulfill My Law and punish those who transgress it!

Thus God gave the ten commandments first by word of mouth, and later engraved upon two tables of stone, to show that the Law was to endure for all time. It was divided into two parts; although Holy Scripture does not expressly say so, we may suppose that the first table contained the three first commandments, which concern the love of God, and the second table the other seven commandments concerning the love of our neighbor. The Law was holy and the tables of stone were kept in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and in the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple.

III

Lastly, we ask "to whom was the Law given?" We know already that it was given to the people of Israel, and, we may ask, how does it then concern us, who are not Israelites? It concerns us

very nearly. St. Augustine says: "What men refused to read in their hearts was engraven upon the tables of stone, that they might always have before their eyes the commandments which should rule their conscience," and so it is. The ten commandments—apart from the three first—merely formulate and express what is written in the conscience of every man. They are not, therefore, for the Jews only; they apply to all men under the sun. They did not first come into force on the day when God proclaimed them from Mount Sinai; they have existed ever since the creation of the world. Nor could they ever be repealed: they will hold good to the end of time. This is what St. Paul meant when he said of the Gentiles: "Who show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them." Our Saviour told us He was not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it, that is, to perfect it.

We see then, dearly beloved brethren, that the Law is not for the Israelites only, but for us. We realize that if the Law of God is contained in the ten commandments it is very important for us to know them. Shame on those Christians who are not even able to say them by heart! Children should learn them from the lips of their father and mother. It would be a good thing, if it were still the custom in Christian families, to recite the commandments together every day, or at least on Sundays, as used to be done in olden days. To repeat them reverently each morning is a great safeguard against breaking them during the day. We must take pains to know exactly what things are commanded and what are forbidden by each

of the ten commandments, for such knowledge is of infinitely more importance than to master all the rules of worldly wisdom. To know the commandments thoroughly and to understand them fully is a big step toward regulating our actions according to the principles they contain; toward detecting and recognizing our sins more exactly, and confessing them more faithfully, and thus making progress in the observance of the Law, until we attain the reward which God, the great Law-giver, has promised: "Blessed is the man who meditates upon the Law of the Lord day and night"—"For thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward." Amen.

SERMON VII

On the Worship of God

"I am the Lord thy God" (*Ex.* xx. 2).

In our last meditation we considered where and by whom and to whom the commandments were given. They were given on Mount Sinai by God to the Israelites and to the human race; they are engraven upon the conscience of all mankind, and Christ confirmed them in express words for the instruction of all His followers. The wonderful phenomena of nature witnessed on Mount Sinai at the time the Law was given to the people of Israel could leave no doubt that this Law had God for its author.

We pass now to the explanation of the commandments, and we will begin to-day with the first. It runs: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me; thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them." And here we may propose two questions which we shall have to ask ourselves, in considering each commandment in turn. What does this commandment forbid? And what does it enjoin? The very first words tell us here what is forbidden: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me." We are forbidden to worship and adore and honor strange gods, that is to say, idolatry is for-

bidden. "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing," . . . "Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them." But what, on the other hand, is enjoined by the first commandment? We are commanded to do the opposite of what is forbidden—we are to honor and worship God. Thus the catechism itself tells us that "this first commandment helps us to keep the great commandment of the love of God, because it commands us to adore God alone."

We will now, with the help of the Holy Ghost, consider three points which suggest themselves:

I. What do we mean when we speak of honoring or worshipping some one?
II. Why should we honor and worship God?
III. How can we do so?

I

What do we mean when we say we give honor to some one? Although it seems a very simple matter, it will perhaps be useful to look into this question closely. We will approach it in rather a roundabout way. If I ask: Do you consider everybody worthy of receiving honor? No; you will answer, certainly not. Whom, then, do you honor? Those who show themselves worthy of it. Now let us see whom we consider deserving of honor. Is old age worthy to be honored? Holy Scripture says: "Rise up before the hoary head." We are to honor the aged because of their years, and because of the vast experience they have accumulated. Is honor due to heroes of war? Yes, because of their courage and endurance. Scholars and artists, too, are worthy of honor; orders

and titles are bestowed on them and monuments erected to them, on account of their learning and skill, and their services in the cause of art and research. We should honor the president and the king, the Pope and our own bishop, even though we hardly knew their names, because of their high office and authority. And the saints in heaven—what of them? If we honor the old on account of their age, heroes for their deeds of valor, scholars and artists for their learning and skill, presidents and kings, Popes and bishops by reason of their office, we should certainly reverence the saints, paying them honor on account of the virtues they practiced on earth, and the sanctity and glory they have attained in heaven. Now let us go back to our original question. Who deserve to be honored? Those who possess in themselves some distinctive mark or perfection worthy of it, whether it be old age or courage or authority or learning or, best of all, virtue and sanctity. Now do you know what we mean by honoring some one? We are getting near to the answer. It means, to recognize either by thoughts, words, or deeds, or by all three together, the distinction, the good qualities, or the perfection of some person. When we think of a man as brave or clever or learned we honor him in our thoughts. When we express those thoughts we honor him by words. When we behave toward him as our high opinion of him prompts us to do, we honor him by deeds. Thus we see that to honor some one means to bear testimony to his merits and his excellence by our thoughts, our words, and our deeds.

II

Now that we understand what is meant by honoring some one it is easy for us to answer our second question: "Why should we honor God?"

We should honor God chiefly because He requires us to do so. It is the first of God's commandments and, therefore, our first duty. For this we were created: "I have created him for My glory, I have formed him and made him." A man who does not honor God is as useless as a clock that does not go, or a boat that can not keep afloat. To honor God is the first and most universal commandment, for it applies to all God's creatures without exception. It holds good even in heaven, where the angels and saints cry without ceasing: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God!" It is binding in this world, too, though here the law is not always complied with; it is obeyed in hell, for what is hell but one unending demonstration of the justice of God! It applies not only to all reasonable creatures, but to the whole of creation; from the brightest star in the firmament to the smallest particle of dust, from the roaring lion to the creeping worm, from the most brilliant flower to the meanest blade of grass, there rises up day and night an everlasting chorus of praise to the power and wisdom and beauty and goodness of the Creator: "The heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the work of His hands" (*Ps.* xviii.). This is not only the first and the greatest, it is also the universal and the most essential commandment which Almighty God in framing His laws could neither have omitted, nor placed anywhere but in the

front, before all the rest. Because He is God; because He is the Creator and we His creatures, the Lord and we His servants; because He is the highest and all others far, far, beneath Him, therefore does He require homage and honor and worship from all the works of His hands: "I am the Lord and there is no Saviour beside Me."

So long as God is God, and so long as creatures are creatures, the law commanding creatures to worship God will endure. It is the first, the most necessary, and most universal law, and God Himself—because He is God—is unable to repeal it. But besides all this it is in itself most just and reasonable. Who can claim to be worthy of honor and worship if not God? For in Him we find perfection, not only in one particular point, as we do in men; He is perfection itself, being infinitely and immeasurably perfect. It has been said of kings that the greater the kingdom the more beautiful should be the crown, and that the most beautiful stones in a royal crown are kindness and compassion. If God's possessions are boundless, so is His generosity. His justice is not weakened by His infinite goodness, His omnipotence is not restricted by His mercy and clemency. He has been from all eternity, yet the strength and vigor of His continuousness is never lessened. How great is His beauty, how unfathomable are the depths of His wisdom! How can we be reluctant to worship the eternal, holy, just, and merciful God, the Creator of all things, the Lord of the universe, the ruler and disposer of everything that exists? We are ready enough to give honor to men who sometimes are far from worthy of it, who know

nothing of us, and who take no notice of our tribute. Do we think, for instance, that we gratify the dead by raising monuments to their memory? We honor men with exaggerated words of fulsome flattery and praise. Why can we not worship God, who is adored by the angels and saints, who asks for our worship, who values it when we give it Him, who is so worthy of it that He can never be sufficiently adored and praised? "Thou art worthy, O Lord, our God, to receive glory and honor and power; because Thou hast created all things and for Thy will they were and have been created." Yes, indeed, whom should we worship if not God, the Creator of all things; the Redeemer, who shed His blood for us; the Sanctifier, who has promised us eternal life? Let us, then, close this meditation with words of praise to God which the Church never wearies of repeating: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

SERMON VIII

On the Sins Against Faith. Culpable Ignorance

"I am the Lord thy God" (*Ex.* xx. 2).

We are commanded by the first commandment to give honor and worship to God. We have already seen what we mean by giving honor to some one; it means that we acknowledge and recognize in some way his good qualities or attributes. We have also seen why we should honor God—because it is what He has expressly bidden us to do and it is the first and most essential and universal of all His commandments. Moreover, it is in itself a just one, for God is infinite in all perfections. Now we can worship God in two ways: interiorly and exteriorly. When the Royal Prophet framed this thought in his mind, "Oh, Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth," he worshiped God interiorly; but when he wrote the words down, and every time we repeat them aloud after him, we worship God by an outward act, or exteriorly.

We will consider, then, first, the interior worship of God. The catechism tells us we must "worship God by faith, hope, and charity; that is, we must believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him with all our heart." Further, it tells us we must "adore God by faith, hope, and charity, prayer and sacrifice." This adoring God by prayer and sacrifice, reduces itself to the practice of adoration, thanksgiving, and the renunciation

of self. Here, then, are six means by which to worship God: Faith, hope, charity, adoration, thanksgiving, and submission to God's will, and by the exercise of each one we shall be paying special honor to one or other of God's infinite perfections. You remember that to honor some one is to recognize his worth, his merit. By faith we acknowledge the truth of God, for how could we firmly "believe all that God has revealed," if we were not convinced that He is the eternal truth? By hope we bear witness to His power, His goodness, and His fidelity, because these attributes are our justification for trusting steadfastly in His promises. By charity we acknowledge that He is the highest good: for otherwise we could not love Him above all things. By our adoration we testify that God is the Supreme Being, for adoration can belong only to Him who is above all others. Finally, by prayer and thanksgiving, we acknowledge Him to be the source of all good things, and by self-sacrifice we submit to His will, and recognize that He is omnipotent and can dispose of us as He wishes. Therefore, we see that in these six ways we honor and worship God in our hearts—interiorly. Further, it follows that any act of ours which is opposed to these six interior acts of worship is a sin either against faith, or hope, or charity, or adoration, or gratitude, or obedience; consequently, it is a sin against the first commandment.

We have thus prepared the way for considering the sins against the first commandment. They divide themselves into sins against the interior and the exterior worship of God. To the first

division belong those sins of which we have just spoken, against faith, hope, charity, adoration, gratitude, and obedience.

Let us now ask, with the catechism: "How does a person sin against faith?" "A person sins against faith (1) by not trying to know what God has taught; (2) by refusing to believe all that God has taught; (3) by neglecting to profess his belief in what God has taught."

The greatest sin against faith is culpable ignorance. Let us consider this to-day, with the help of the Holy Ghost.

1. First, I must state that this sin is a very common one. Perhaps you think that ignorance about matters of faith, about the commandments of God and of the Church, and about the holy sacraments is not very widespread. Unfortunately, it is to be found everywhere, as those engaged in teaching the Faith and in hearing confessions have ample opportunity of knowing. You may protest that in earlier times things were even worse. We can not prove it and it is not my intention to compare this age with any other. Be it better or worse than foregoing ages, the fact remains that much culpable ignorance is to be found among Christians to-day. If you suggest that it may be so in country places, but that it can not be true of the towns, I answer that it is not my task to discover where ignorance is greatest; I can only repeat that it is to be found in the country and also in the towns. You protest, and tell me this ignorance is only amongst uneducated persons, but I reply that unfortunately it exists amongst educated and uneducated persons

alike. Let me suggest one test by way of illustration. Suppose that you were suddenly called upon to repeat the commandments of the Church, would there not, perhaps, be a good many who would be unable to recite them in their right order?

Now, against my statement concerning the prevalence of ignorance on religious matters, three arguments may be put forward.

1. Children are compelled to attend school, and in the schools (the presumption is that they attend Catholic schools) they learn their catechism and Bible history day after day. Certainly; but children are not all equally gifted or equally diligent, nor have they all equally good memories. Many children have forgotten before the next morning what they learned the evening before, and we all know the disastrous results of a few weeks' vacation on the mind of a child. There are many grown-up people who now can hardly sign their names, but who yet as school children could read and write respectably. Why? Because they have had so little practice since they left school. What, then, is likely to happen to the religious knowledge acquired in childhood at school, if, when their school-days are over, children get no further instruction, never hear a sermon, and never read a spiritual book? Thousands of new impressions, experiences, and distractions blot out of their minds what they learned in early youth—or leave but a very dim recollection, as of something far off and unfamiliar?

2. Religious instructions are constantly given and opportunities of hearing sermons are very

frequent. This is most certainly a fact, but are there not many who year after year neglect to avail themselves of it? Many who purposely go to hear a Mass at which no sermon is preached, or who come so late that the sermon is over, or who seek a place where it is impossible to hear and follow what is said in the pulpit? And these people are nearly always those who are least well instructed in their religion.

3. Finally, you say that people read a great deal nowadays and that any number of books are to be had treating of religious subjects. Certainly, but do people in point of fact read these books? Grown-up people read novels, one after another. Young people delight in stories of crime and robbery and murder. Men read their newspapers. Undoubtedly people read a great deal nowadays, to amuse themselves; but for the most part it is stuff that is not worth writing, still less worth printing, and least of all worth reading. There are other books, no doubt, which instruct us about religious matters, but they are comparatively little read.

Therefore, the reasons I have given, (1) that the lessons of childhood are quickly forgotten, (2) that sermons and opportunities of instruction are neglected, and (3) that religious books are very little read, prove that culpable ignorance of religion is to-day a very common evil.

2. Secondly, I say that this ignorance is a very serious matter. Why? Because a person who is not well grounded in his faith is more likely to waver in it, is more liable to doubts and disbelief, than one who is well instructed. A badly built

wall will collapse more readily than one whose foundations are strong and deep. The commandments of God and of the Church will be more easily broken by those who are badly instructed than by those who realize exactly what they are commanded or forbidden, and for what reasons. Undoubtedly, also, those who have been carelessly prepared for the holy sacraments, and who therefore fail to appreciate their grace and efficacy, will feel little inclination to approach them, and are in danger of receiving them unprofitably and even unworthily.

Those who, through their own fault, are badly instructed about their religion, and have no wish to remedy the matter, show that they set very little store by it. If a man were to receive a casket full of gold and treasures, and did not take the trouble even to open it and see what it contained, he would surely be displaying great indifference to his precious possession, and to the friend who gave it to him. He would probably take little care of it, not troubling to guard or defend it; perhaps he would not even greatly feel its loss if it were stolen. Well, our faith is, we may say, a very great treasure, the source of justification and salvation. Do you not see now that there is good reason for us all to try to be thoroughly well instructed in religious matters? Now, how can this be done? By parents encouraging their children to learn the catechism and Bible history, themselves overlooking their studies, and setting them a good example by attending sermons and instructions with them; by questioning them about what they have learned; and by keeping good re-

ligious books in the house and reading aloud from one or other of them from time to time. How did it come about that so many of the European countries fell away from the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century? Much has been written on this subject, but I think we may say that, whatever number of causes worked together to bring about this great catastrophe, two are specially obvious. In the better classes it was greed, coveting the possessions of the Church; and amongst the common people it was ignorance, which allowed them to be swayed by every passing wind of new ideas. And what is the reason, to-day, that faith is so weak in many hearts, and that mixed marriages are becoming so frequent? It is in great part, though not entirely, because of an imperfect knowledge of the Catholic religion. Let us prize our faith highly, and, if we really value it, we shall wish for nothing better than to give ourselves up to the study of it and improve in our religious knowledge day by day. Amen.

SERMON IX

On Sins Against Faith

"I have kept the Faith" (2 *Tim.* iv. 7).

FAITH, as we have seen, is one of those practices of virtue by which we give to God the honor which is due to Him. By sinning against faith we sin against that interior worship of God which is required of us by the first commandment. We have already considered culpable ignorance of the doctrines of the Church as a sin against faith. It is undeniable that there is a great deal of it at the present day, and it is so harmful and mischievous that it attacks and undermines the very foundations of the Christian life.

The other sins against faith may be divided into three classes: sins of thought, of word, and of deed. With the help of the Holy Ghost we will briefly consider these three classes of sins.

I

We can sin against faith by thought in three ways, by unbelief, by heresy, and by wilful doubt in matters of faith. How can we distinguish these three sins?

The unbeliever thinks within himself: God has never spoken to us; what has been given to us as the Word of God is untrue from beginning to end; intentionally or unintentionally, it is a lie, a deception. Heresy does not deny that God has spoken to men, but it believes only that portion

—be it large or small—of God's revelation which it approves, rejecting the rest.

The man who entertains wilful doubts on matters of faith is neither a believer nor an unbeliever, nor a heretic. He thinks that what he has been taught may be true, but it may just as well be untrue. He is undecided; his mind is like the finger of a balance, inclining at the least pressure one way or the other, so that he is never at rest.

Now clearly it is quite possible that unbelief, false religions, and religious doubts under certain circumstances are not sins at all. It could not be accounted a sin to the poor heathen that he does not possess our faith when he has had no opportunity of hearing God's revelations to man. Nor could a person, born and brought up outside the true Church, who never entertains a doubt of the truth of his own religion, be considered to have sinned by heresy or false religion. Again, doubts may sometimes arise in the heart of a Catholic against his will, doubts which he does not encourage and is very unwilling to admit, but which nevertheless assail and attack him anew every time he repulses them. Are such thoughts to be looked upon as sins? Far from it. It is only the doubt which is in some way of our own making that is "wilful doubt" and to be considered as a sin against faith.

A blind person can not be blamed for wandering about in darkness and going astray; but it is a different thing where a man has the right use of his eyes and refuses to open them though the sun is shining all round him; or who keeps them purposely closed to avoid seeing the light of day;

or who rejects the light offered him, even extinguishing it in the night, preferring to be in darkness. Unbelief, heresy, and wilful doubt are very great sins in those to whom the gift of faith has been given, but who will not make use of it, who close the eyes of their soul at the first glimpse of its rays, veiling and even extinguishing the light which has guided their footsteps hitherto along the road of life. Disbelief, heresy, and wilful doubt are sins because they detract from the worship which we are bound to pay to God, the very Truth who can neither err nor lead us into error. The more wilful these sins are, the greater is our guilt, for such offenses sap the very foundations of the Christian life. When the heart stops beating, and the lungs no longer draw breath, the body dies; and this is why physicians look upon a defective heart or lungs as a very serious matter. Faith is in the same relation to the spiritual life as the heart and lungs to the life of the body, and, therefore, all sins against faith must be considered very serious and dangerous.

You may think that all this is so very obvious that it is hardly necessary to point it out. We are not in danger of disbelief or of heresy, it is true, but we may at times be troubled with doubts, about the creation perhaps, or the efficacy of the sacraments, or about the Incarnation, or some other article of faith. Perhaps at the very moment that we approach the sacraments, or are making a meditation or listening to a sermon, these doubts assail us. Now what should we do in such a case? Firstly, we must not be astonished that we are troubled by such thoughts, for the

surest way to demolish a building is to undermine its foundations. The evil spirit knows well that these attacks on our faith and temptations to doubt are the way to undermine the spiritual life of a Christian. Secondly, we should at once humble ourselves and say: "How can this poor intelligence of mine, which is a mere spark, compare with the sun of eternal Truth?" Thirdly, I ask you what should we do if we found a post or stake was unsteady and loose in the ground? We should not pull it out, should we? or shake it violently to test its strength? No; we should hold it steady and drive it downward again into the earth till it stood firm and solid once more. And so, with our doubts about faith, we must not probe or pull them to pieces, asking ourselves: "How can this be true?" "Can such a thing be possible?" We must turn our thoughts to the foundations on which our belief is grounded and say: "God, who is all truth, has declared it: I must believe it. The infallible Church teaches it; I must believe." Finally, we should, as in every temptation, pray earnestly and diligently that God may come to our assistance and dispel the mists of error.

II

Sins of word against faith are of two kinds, sin by writing, that is to say, by reading and disseminating writings against religion; and sin by word of mouth, that is to say, by speaking against religion or listening to such conversation.

It is not difficult to see that there is danger of sinning against faith by reading books against re-

ligion, and, we might add, newspapers and magazines, too, when we consider by whom and in what way these works are produced and by whom they are read.

(a) What sort of men are the authors of these anti-religious writings? Naturally, they are those who have lost their faith and often enough their sense of morality, also. They are men who are eager to take away from others the Faith which they themselves no longer possess. It is well known that Voltaire, the standard-bearer of irreligion in France, was as greedy and avaricious as he was irreligious and immoral. Yet, in spite of his avarice, he had many of his godless writings printed at his own expense, bound as prayer-books, and laid about in the churches in order to spread his doctrines amongst the people. Did we but know what kind of men such writers for the most part are, we should avoid having anything to do with them, decline to stay in houses they frequent, and refuse to dine in their company; and needless to add we should not look to them for enlightenment on the mysteries of religion.

(b) How are these works against faith produced and circulated? It is comparatively rare to find one which is presented straightforwardly as an attack upon revelation. The title page does not announce it to be "a guide to immorality," or a "treatise against religion." The poison is administered in some more subtle way. To all appearances the object of these works is to combat ignorance by reason, or to advocate liberty instead of slavery, or to supersede superstition by science, and to spread light in the darkness. Thus

disguised the poisonous weapons of scorn, contempt, doubt, blasphemy, falsehood, and distorted truth are lying in wait for us and are but the more deadly for being embellished with fine language, witty dialogue, and alluring pictures. They are all the more dangerous because they appear to be well intentioned, learned, and moderate in their views. We ought, indeed, to be always on our guard when it is a question of reading literature of this kind, the work of such men.

The danger grows greater as it becomes increasingly easy to circulate books. Solomon said, even in his time, there seemed to be no end to the writings of men; and to-day how many thousands are busy with their pens writing against religion! How many thousand copies of a book can be printed in a few hours! How cheap they are to buy! How easy it is to procure them and to pass them on from one to another!

(c) Finally, by whom are these works read? By inquisitive minds that devour with their eyes everything that falls in their way; by inexperienced minds that can not distinguish between poison and wholesome food; by ignorant minds that are not armed against the attacks of the enemy and that fall easy victims; by youthful minds that are at an age when all the human passions are awake and that drink in the irreligious teaching which will allow them to give full rein to their natural inclinations. There are numberless young men and women who have read themselves into a state of complete unbelief, having their faith filched from them piecemeal, as they have turned

over the pages of such volumes as I have been describing.

What applies to the reading of books against religion applies also to conversations of the same kind, or to listening to such conversations. Look well to it, then, parents, mothers, and fathers, that your sons and daughters do not introduce such literature into your homes. Anti-religious works should be banished. Be careful about the newspapers and magazines you leave lying about. If they scoff at religion you must give them up, no matter how interesting they may be, or how well and cheaply they may be produced. The inhabitants of Ephesus, on St. Paul's advice, burned books of the value of £1500. Have a care, parents, where you send your sons and your daughters to study or to work. If they are in houses where they come into daily contact with unbelievers, then you are endangering their faith. See to the friends your children make, and whom they want to marry. What is a "good match" compared with the danger of losing one's faith? And you young people, be careful to choose good friends and companions! Be always on the lookout. Wherever you detect a want of faith or an inclination to scoff at religion, hold back! Is your faith so strong that you can confidently expose it to danger? No, our faith is weak, and temptations abound in every direction. Even for a strong and well-built ship the sea is full of dangers, and he who wishes to sail on it in safety must not only see that his vessel is stout and true, but must also go out of his way to foresee every reef and every

shoal, every current and every warning of hurricane.

III

We sin by deed against faith through indifference or through denying our faith. A few words on this subject will suffice. We show indifference when we do not care or consider it to be of any importance, whether or not we have the Faith; whether or not we are well instructed in our religion; whether ours is the true belief or not; whether we live according to it or not; and whether we profess it or deny it. There is only a very short way to go between such a condition of indifference and a complete defection—an open denial of our faith.

But to deny the Faith is a very great sin; to lose one's faith is an immense and an irreparable calamity. An unbeliever is like a blind man—without light. He neither knows what manner of man he is, nor *where* he is—in a place of trial. He has lost sight of the goal given him to strive for, and has placed himself on a level with those animals whose only end is here on this earth. He may be the cleverest, the strongest, the most beautiful of the animal creation, but he is also the most unhappy. For the mere animal enjoys his pleasures without any sting of conscience; he bears his present suffering without remembrance of the past or anticipations of the future; he will die, but he does not fear death. The unbelieving man is not so well off. His pleasures are spoiled by the gnawings of conscience; his sufferings are doubled by his recollections of what has gone be-

fore and what may be still to come. The bitter thought of death is constantly in his mind with the uncertainty as to what it will bring. But death will not be his end: it will be but the beginning of an eternity of misery. "He who believeth not, is already judged." Amen.

SERMON X

On the Sins Against Hope

"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded" (*Ps.* xxx. 2).

WE HAVE considered the sins against faith; we will now turn to those against hope. Hope being a virtue by which we worship God interiorly, all sins against it must be regarded as sins against the true worship of God and therefore against the first commandment.

The catechism asks: "Which are the sins against hope?" and answers: "The sins against hope are presumption and despair." These two classes of sins can easily be distinguished; we can sin either by hoping too little, or by hoping too much. When we do not hope enough, our sin is mistrust of God, or despair; when we are too confident and hopeful, it is presumption. We will consider these two points to-day, with the help of the Holy Ghost.

I

To have too little hope in God is to sin by want of confidence, or by despair.

We show a want of confidence in God when our hope of those things which we have a right to expect from Him is not firm and steadfast, that is to say, when our trust in Him is limited and has a tinge of doubt in it. If a man makes a promise to us we may have cause to mistrust him, for

people sometimes promise more than they can do; we may happen to know that he has on previous occasions broken his word; or he may be a boastful, careless person who, though ready to promise many things, does not perform any of them. But have we a shadow of reason for doubting God in this way? He has promised us great things: the forgiveness of sins when we turn to Him for pardon, all necessary graces when we ask them of Him, and, finally, unending happiness which will exceed all our expectations. God has not promised us more than He can fulfil, for He is almighty, nor can we doubt His goodness. Will He forget His promises? Impossible. Will He be faithful to them? He can not break His word. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." His promises are more firmly fixed than the stars in the heavens.

What, then, does a man do when he hopes in God to a certain extent and yet allows a mixture of mistrust to creep into his hope? He sins and dishonors God by doubting either His power or His goodness or His fidelity; and we know that God Himself considers this want of trust in Him as a grievous offense deserving of punishment. When the Israelites were in the desert God commanded Moses to strike a rock with his rod, and water should gush forth for the people and their cattle who were dying of thirst. Before all the assembled people Moses said these words: "Can we bring you forth water out of this rock?" He doubted, and though it was only for an instant it was an offense to God, the more so as Moses was a man who, having often experienced the wonder-

ful power of God, should have been an example of steadfast hope and confidence. He did indeed hope, but he doubted for one moment whether water could flow from a hard rock in the sun-parched desert. He yielded to a slight misgiving, and how heavy was his punishment! Having led the people of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, across the desert, to the borders of the long-desired Land of Promise, he saw from afar its valleys and hills, but he was forbidden to enter it. "Because you have not believed Me," that is to say, "because you mistrusted Me," you shall not bring these people into the land which I will give them" (*Num.* xx. 12). Our hope in God must be absolutely firm and confident and free from all shadow of mistrust. St. Paul likens it to an anchor, and this is the reason why hope is so often symbolized by an anchor. "We have fled for refuge, to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul sure and firm." An anchor is attached to a ship, and the ship is on the ocean. The ocean is in constant motion, its waves rolling in upon the beach, and with the water the ship moves also, tossed about by the waves, backward and forward, up and down, this way and that. But, however stormy the sea may be, the mariner has one final resource in his anchor. He drops it and it fixes itself in the bed of the sea and holds the ship firm in the middle of the storm-tossed water. Our soul is a ship moving across the ocean of life. It is driven here and there by every inclination of our restless natures. The waves on the sea of life are the vain hopes, the disappointments, the successes, losses, desires,

discouragements of this world. But, however restless our hearts and souls may be, we have a firm anchor in the virtue of hope as long as we possess true confidence in God. Let us fly to hope, for it is the anchor of the soul: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded."

Great and numerous are the grounds for hope as long as we fix our eyes on Almighty God; but the reasons for mistrust are equally strong and abundant if we turn them on ourselves. We are surrounded by so many temptations and opportunities of doing wrong; our inclinations are so prone to evil; we know how many times in the past we have fallen into sin and how many good resolutions we have failed to keep; and turning toward the future we gaze down a long vista of dangers, leading we know not whither. There is, indeed, reason for us to work out our salvation "in fear and trembling." Our hope and confidence must be in God, and all our mistrust in ourselves: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me."

Despair is a far greater sin than mistrust or mere want of confidence. Mistrust is, as it were, a disease of hope, but despair is its death. The man who despairs either says to himself in the words of Cain: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon" (*Gen.* iv. 13), or he says: "I can never obtain grace again," or else, "It is impossible for me to be saved; I am lost for ever and ever." It is a horrible and a grievous sin, nearly allied to a sin against faith, which tells us that every sinner may hope for pardon, that

God gives the necessary graces to every man, and that we must not cease to hope to the last day of our lives. It is an offense against the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, and it denies one of God's greatest attributes, His mercy. Holy Scripture says the whole earth is full of God's mercy, that it reaches over mountains to beyond the heavens, and it has always specially characterized God's dealings with His creatures. What would be the greatest insult one could offer to a scientist or to a soldier? Surely to throw doubt on the knowledge of the one, or on the courage of the other. Well, then, believe me, nothing could be more insulting to almighty God than to throw doubt upon His mercy. Despair is a great sin, far-reaching in its consequences, because it opens up the way to evil of all kinds, for what is to restrain the man who is convinced that there is no hope of salvation for him? Even suicide is justifiable in his eyes. When Judas fell into despair he at once went out to hang himself. This was not only horrible, it was foolish; for even Judas would have found forgiveness at the foot of the cross. The blood of the Saviour whom he betrayed could have obtained pardon even for him. My dearly beloved brethren, should such wild and gloomy thoughts ever force themselves upon us, making us think that everything is lost, we must reject them with all our might and drive them back to hell, whence they come. Drop the anchor of hope! Embrace the cross of Christ and cling to it; take refuge in His sacred wounds, His precious blood, His compassionate Heart, and throw yourself upon the boundless mercy of God:

"Thou forsakest none of those, O God, who do not forsake Thee"—"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded."

II

We sin by presumption, when our confidence in God's help and His mercy is excessive and unmeasured. How can this be? Something unmeasured means something that is not kept within due bounds, so, when we expect from God any thing that He has not promised us, or more than He has promised, our confidence is unmeasured and therefore presumptuous. For example, it is presumption for a man to place himself deliberately in some great danger, trusting to God to save him from it. Our Saviour Himself when He was on the pinnacle of the temple was tempted by Satan: "If Thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down," and His answer was, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (*Matt.* iv). The same applies to cases of moral danger. People who deliberately place themselves in circumstances conducive to sin, sometimes say to themselves: "Oh, I am quite safe, my intentions are good, and God is beside me. I shall not fall into sin, although I am not avoiding, but am even deliberately seeking the occasions of it." That is presumption. It is certainly true that God has promised to give us His help in the hour of temptation and danger. But His promise is to those who call upon His name, to those who avoid danger as far as possible, but who find themselves face to face with perils which they can not escape. He did not promise help to those who deliberately expose

themselves. On the contrary, of them it is said, "They who love danger shall perish in it." We could cite examples from every age, from every country, from every class and every time of life, to show that those who rush boastfully into danger, deluded by a presumptuous confidence in God, are sure to fall easy victims to sin.

It is presumption, also, to continue in sin, putting off the day of conversion, claiming God's mercy and deferring repentance to the hour of death, or to a time of illness, or to old age. We are only justified in hoping for what God has promised us. We can not count upon old age, or on a death preceded by illness. Can you say: "We have entered into a league with death and have made a covenant with him"? Hundreds of people die suddenly, and how can we know whether we shall live to old age? God has made us no promise to that effect, nor has He undertaken to give us the grace of repentance at the precise moment we may wish for it. Is it written anywhere that He will continue His grace to us in our old age, if we have refused it in our youth? Can we expect special help from God in the day of sickness and death, if in our days of youth and health we rejected and denied Him? The purpose of God's mercy is to give us courage to deplore our sins, to entreat forgiveness, to avoid occasions of sin, in fact, it is to help us to overcome sin. But the presumptuous man abuses God's mercy. He turns the most precious thing in the world into a deadly poison, using it as a cloak for evil, not as a protection against it. To such a one it is not an incentive to repentance, it

is a reason for deferring it, and justifying continuance in sin! Who could have less right to expect God's grace at the hour of death than the man who has abused it all his life? What could be more audacious than to expect a desire for heaven, while dallying on the road to hell?

Far be it from me to think that any one of you is guilty of acting so wrongfully, but do we not all of us commit sins so very like presumption that they may be nearly allied to it? Have you never given way to such a thought as this: "Why should I not commit this sin just once more? It makes no difference when I go to confession whether I have to say that I fell once or twice!" Do we not perhaps allow the thought of God's great mercy to influence us to view our sins more leniently and to be somewhat indifferent in our sorrow?

Let us from this time forward pray: "O Lord, in Thee have I hoped. All my life I will hope in Thee: in every temptation and in every danger; in life and in death. I will rely upon Thee for everything that is helpful and needful for my eternal salvation. Thou wilt never let me be confounded. Deliver me, O Lord, from that false, pernicious hope, which causes us to rely upon ourselves for those things for which we should look only to Thee; which leads us to expect Thy blessings without striving to deserve them, and, because Thy heart is a well of mercy, to plunge unhesitatingly into sin. Confine my hope within due bounds, and grant me neither to rely upon myself, nor to place a presumptuous confidence in Thee. In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped. Let me never be confounded." Amen.

SERMON XI

On the Outward Worship of God

"I am the Lord thy God" (*Ex.* xx. 2).

We worship God interiorly by faith, hope, love, adoration, thanksgiving, and submission to His holy will. Any act of ours which is in opposition to these virtues is so far a sin against the interior worship of God and, therefore, against the first commandment. We have already considered how we may offend against faith, and also the sins against hope—those which are caused by lack of hope, doubt, and despair, as well as those caused by over-confidence and presumption.

We come now to the sins against love. All sin is in reality an offense against the love of God, though at the same time violating some other commandment. We will for the present deal only with those sins which are directly opposed to this love, in other words, dislike and hatred of God. These are the greatest of all sins because they are directed immediately against the divine goodness and imply the wish that God did not exist, or that He could be destroyed, or, at least, anger at His infinite perfections and hatred and enmity toward Himself. Truly this is a diabolical sin and hardly comprehensible in a man. Yet it is written of a certain eighteenth century writer that he delighted in representing himself as a personal enemy of God. When the dreadful revolution of 1871 was raging in Paris one of the foremost lead-

ers declared at a public meeting that if there were a God mankind ought to shoot Him down. One does not know whether to be more horrified or amused at this remark, for there is certainly something laughable in the thought of God Almighty allowing Himself to be shot by the revolutionaries of Paris! By neglecting to give thanks to God, we offend against gratitude; and by continually complaining and railing against His dispensations we fail in the submission due to His holy will.

We see, then, that we have to worship God inwardly, by firm faith, by constant hope, by love and daily acts of adoration, by thanksgiving and submission to His commands and to the wise designs of His providence. So shall we fulfill the first commandment, and in a fitting way worship the good God in our hearts.

But there is also an exterior or outward worship due to God. Let us to-day, with the help of the Holy Ghost, consider two points:

I. The nature and qualities of this outward worship.

II. The offenses against it.

I

Outward and exterior worship of God consists in giving expression openly to the reverence and adoration which we have for Him in our hearts. The difference between inward and outward worship of God is easily seen and requires no explanation. That reverence for God which we cherish in the depths of our being, and to which we can give no outward expression, we call interior worship; exterior worship is that worship in which

the body plays its part by the bending of the knees and folding of the hands, moving of the lips and raising of the eyes to God; or in praying in the churches in company with other people, following the same service, and worshiping God publicly.

We might perhaps be tempted to ask if it is not enough to worship God interiorly. He can read the depths of our souls, and Christ told us to worship Him "in spirit and in truth." We shall see, however, when we consider the qualities of exterior worship, that it hinges onto the other and must sometimes at least be practised conjointly with it.

(a) First, we shall see that this outward worship is a very natural thing. The soul and the body are so closely bound up together that everything that passes in the soul is reflected in some way by the body, in the face, or the eyes or the movements and general demeanor. Is this not so? Does purity of heart not shine through the eyes, just as impurity is plainly stamped on the whole countenance? Do rage, happiness, grief, fear, horror, not show themselves in the face? Anger often finds a vent in words, while joy and sorrow express themselves in song. Is it not natural, therefore, that the interior devotion of our hearts should seek some outlet?

(b) The outward expression of our interior appreciation of God is very wholesome. Every prayer we utter and all our acts of devotion must derive their true significance and vitality from within, for otherwise they would be but empty husks—mere lip-service and hypocrisy. But, al-

though the interior worship of God comes first and can exist alone, yet it is by the help of these practices of outward worship that it grows and increases and gains strength. Outward worship is nothing without the inward feeling, but it is also true to say that the inward feeling has seldom much strength or power without the assistance of outward forms. This is not hard to prove. Try just once to pray really devoutly without any outward expression of devotion. A few may be able to manage it, but they will be very few. After a few moments of recollection, one's thoughts wander about, here and there; then they return to earth and become lost in the affairs of everyday life. To worship God in our hearts only is a very difficult matter. But now try again and this time fall upon our knees! The very act helps us to remember in whose presence we stand, and what we ourselves are who thus abase ourselves. Fold your hands, raise your eyes to heaven, clothe your prayer in whatever words memory or affection may supply, or use those which you find in your prayer-book, and you will see how much easier it all becomes. And when you unite yourself to a whole congregation, joining in the general prayers and hymns of a Church service, you will find that your soul is carried heavenward on the wings of devotion. We know how ivy, unsupported, creeps along the ground; but place it near a tree or a wall or a tower and it will climb and climb until at last it reaches the very summit.

(c) Finally, we may say that this outward worship is not only natural and wholesome, it is even necessary. Man and all mankind were created to

worship God. Now men possess not only a soul, but a body, and the body, too, must take part in the worship of God. This is its highest purpose, its best title to nobility. The art of sculptors and painters has power to reproduce only material objects: the sea lashed by a storm or calmly at rest, beautiful landscapes, animals great and little; but their best work is done in representing the human form. They paint it in the innocence of childhood, the glow of youth, the dignity of old age, at work or at rest. But the body of man is never more admirable than in the exercise of its highest function when it is giving expression upon bended knees, with clasped hands and moving lips to the inward devotion of the soul. Moreover, God should be worshipped not only by every one of His rational creatures, body and soul, but also by every family as a whole, by every congregation as a whole, and by the Church as a whole. The very angels of heaven are grouped in choirs, and sing a song of praise to the Lord of Hosts, not each individually, but collectively; and the chorus is swelled by the voices of the elect. "I heard a voice," writes St. John, a voice, but "as it were the voice of a great multitude," not a single voice, but "as the voice of many waters." God is indeed to be worshiped inwardly by each individual, but we can only take our part in the universal chorus of praise by joining in the practices of outward worship, by assembling together at certain times, at particular hours, praying to Him in the same words, and glorifying Him with the same hymns and canticles. Consider, too, how much hangs upon this question of outward worship. If

there is no external religion then the Church must cease to be, for the Church is a community engaged in the outward worship of God; the sacraments must be given up, for they are outward forms of grace: the Mass and all other kinds of service and public prayer in communities and families must be abolished. In fact, all the warmth and vitality of religion would soon perish from the face of the earth.

II

We have come to the conclusion, then, that God must be worshiped outwardly, as well as inwardly. We now come to the question of how we can commit sin in this matter, and we shall see that we can do so most easily in two ways: (1) by neglecting to attend Mass and the other services of the Church; (2) by behaving irreverently when we are present at them.

The Church lays upon us the strict obligation of attending Mass, and the first of her commandments is this: "To hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation." It can not be doubted that the Church is authorized to command us to do certain things, and she received this authority direct from Jesus Christ, the Son of God. "He who heareth you, heareth Me; and he who despiseth you, despiseth Me; whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven." This commandment of the Church is, moreover, not difficult to comply with, and it is fraught with blessings to those who fulfil it. Even if the Church had not given us a commandment on this subject it would, none the less, be our duty to pay

to God some form of outward worship. We are not told exactly when and where and in what words we are to pray to God, and yet it is certain that for all those who have attained the use of reason prayer is necessary to salvation.

It is, then, obviously sinful to stay away from Church on Sunday without some very valid reason, and those who do so are breaking the first commandment. It is a sin against God, because we thereby refuse to worship Him openly, as every one on earth and in heaven is bound to do. It is a sin against our neighbor, because by our bad example we encourage him also to be negligent; and it is a sin against ourselves, because we are refusing to accept the graces proffered to those who are zealous in God's service.

It is possible, also, to commit sin even although we do not neglect to hear Mass and go to Church, by behaving irreverently when we are present. Our Lord one day drove out of the Temple some people who were buying and selling within its precincts, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers. Are there not people nowadays who, without exactly carrying on their business in the Church, allow their thoughts to be occupied with buying and selling and speculations of loss and gain? There are others who remain as straight and stiff in God's presence as the pillars of the nave, who feel no more devotion than the benches upon which they sit, and who are as mute as the pictures on the walls. Again, there are many who come to Church only to see and to be seen, and who insult God in His own house by giddy conduct and often by shameful thoughts.

Can we call such behavior worshiping God, edifying our neighbor, and earning a blessed reward for ourselves? No, indeed, quite the contrary. Such disrespect is nothing less than a sin, an offense against this, the first of all the commandments.

Let us, then, worship God both inwardly and outwardly. Let us worship Him in our families by public prayer, and in the churches by joining with the congregation, in union with the whole Church. Our devotion will encourage others to be devout, and we in turn shall be stimulated by their example, just as a number of glowing coals together produce a roaring fire. If we willingly enroll ourselves here below in the choir of those creatures who worship their Creator both inwardly and outwardly, we may be sure that God will admit us at last to His heavenly choir to sing a never-ending song of praise to our eternal King. "Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honor and power and strength, to our God forever and ever." Amen.

SERMON XII

On Idolatry, Superstition, Sacrilege and Simony

"Thou shalt not have strange gods before me" (*Ex.* xx. 3).

In our last meditation we saw that it is natural, wholesome, and even necessary to pay outward worship to God. We also considered that we may offend in this matter either by neglecting to be present at the services of the Church, or by behaving irreverently when present.

The catechism next deals with a series of sins, some of which offend against the interior worship, some against the exterior worship due to God, and some against both. They are idolatry, superstition, sacrilege, and simony. Taking them in their order, we will, with the help of the Holy Ghost, devote our instruction to-day to their fuller consideration.

I. Idolatry.—Idolatry consists in giving to some creature the honor which is due to God alone. Supreme honor and worship is due to the one true God, and to Him only. All other beings are but creatures, and he who may worship any creature whatsoever is guilty of idolatry. It is a very grievous sin, because by it not only is the honor due to God denied Him, but it is given to one of His creatures, and as often as not it is bestowed on man's own work. We have proof that it is a grievous sin in the eyes of God, for He suffered 2300 Israelites who had worshiped the golden calf

to be destroyed in one day: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and shalt serve Him only" (*Deut.* vi. 13). "For I am God and there is no other"; "Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me: thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing . . . thou shalt not adore them nor serve them."

Idolatry is the sin of the heathen races. All manner of creatures have been worshiped by them; the stars, the sun and the moon were the gods of the Chaldeans; nature and the elements those of the Greeks; animals were adored by the Egyptians; dead heroes by the Greeks, living heroes by the Romans; in Africa some of the tribes choose inanimate, lifeless things, such as pieces of wood, and monstrous unhewn stones. Even Satan himself has had his worshipers. The Jews, more than once, were led into idolatry by the example of the heathens, but the Christian martyrs, on the other hand, preferred to lose all their possessions and even life itself rather than offer one single grain of incense to an idol or false God.

II. Superstition.—In the second place we have to consider superstition. This is giving or ascribing to certain things a mysterious and secret power which God has not bestowed on them. Obviously, then, this is not so much a sin against faith, as against the true worship of God; but it will be necessary to consider the nature of superstition more closely. It consists, we have said, in attributing mysterious powers to certain things. Many things in this world are endowed with wonderful powers, and it is not, of course, sinful to recognize them. When we sow a seed in the earth we attribute to it the power of growth; and we

ascribe healing virtues to a great many plants. We credit the electric current with being able, under certain circumstances, to produce light. Some country people believe that the moon exercises an influence over the growth of plants; it is certain at any rate that the tides are controlled by the relative position of the moon to the earth. But there is nothing mysterious or secret in these things of which we speak; they have been proved and are established facts. For a long time these latent powers were unknown or unrealized and are possibly still unknown to many, but they are evident and are not what we mean by secret powers.

Superstition consists in attributing to things secret and mysterious powers which God has not bestowed on them. God has endowed everything with a special virtue of its own, giving a distinct nature to each thing He has created. It is in the nature of the sun to give light, of air to move, of water to flow; the effects of wine are to intoxicate, while bread contains nourishment. These powers are part of the nature of these things. God sometimes, by the blessing of the Church, extends the power of a thing beyond that which it possesses by nature. By the appointment of Jesus Christ certain words and certain ceremonials used in the administration of the sacraments have acquired a power and efficacy such as they do not possess in any other connection; but these powers are bestowed on them by God.

It is not superstition to ascribe to water the power to drive mills and to bear heavy ships, for this God made inherent in its nature when He

created it; nor is it superstitious to believe that holy water blessed by the Church can remit the sins of the contrite, for such power has been bestowed by God in answer to the prayers of the Church. Again, we can believe without superstition that the water in the sacrament of Baptism washes away sins, which would be unaffected by all the other forces of nature. We ascribe these things to a power proceeding from Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

However, to attribute to certain things a secret power which God has not given to them, either by nature, or through the prayers of the Church, or at the institution of a sacrament, is superstition. For many centuries people believed that the fate of a man was determined by the position of the stars, and especially of the planets, at the hour of his birth; that was superstition. The great astronomer Kepler, who formulated the laws which govern the courses of the planets, and who should surely have seen through such superstitious nonsense, consented sometimes to read the stars and cast horoscopes. Asked one day how he, with his clear head, could lend himself to such folly, he answered: "Once upon a time a foolish daughter was able to support her wise mother." He was a poor man and he meant to say that superstition and astrology were profitable, whereas science and astronomy were badly paid. There are many forms of superstition of this kind even to this day: Telling fortunes by cards; foretelling events by dreams and omens, or by the tea-leaves in a cup or by palmistry. There are also people who profess to heal burns and wounds by mysterious

signs, to discover hidden treasures, to make themselves and others invulnerable to swords or bullets! All this is sheer superstition. There are countless practices of this kind; almost every place has its own special superstitions. Books have been published which deal with nothing but signs, omens, and charms. Superstition is as common in all countries and at all times as weeds in a garden. We find it among heathens and Christians, believers and unbelievers, educated as well as uneducated people, in towns and in the country, but wherever we may find it it has certain marks by which it is to be recognized. Superstition often reveals itself through its anxiety for concealment; it shuns investigation at the hands of doctors and priests; it usually makes a great point of particular dates and special hours, peculiar numbers and words and signs; it insists on the use of so many signs of the cross, so many prayers and sacred words to be repeated a fixed number of times; finally, it believes implicitly in the efficacy of its own charms.

Now, you may ask, what is there sinful in superstition? It may seem to you more foolish, stupid, and ignorant than wrong. Then you have not yet analyzed it completely. It is in its very essence a sin against the worship of God. Imagine a man engaged in some superstitious practice, let us say telling fortunes by cards. Let us ask him some questions. Do you think you can foretell the future in this way? Certainly. Can the cards of themselves do this? Oh, no! How can a piece of paper know the future? Have they acquired such a power through the blessing of the Church? No.

Or by some special dispensation of God? No. Well, then, from whom have they derived this power? The question requires an answer, and the only one that can be given is this: If the cards have not this power by nature, or have not derived it direct from God, or through the blessing of the Church, there remains only one possibility, and that is, that it is the devil's work. Is it not, then, an insult to God to have recourse to His enemies for help and advice? You will exclaim that you never thought of it in that light, that you had no intention of doing such a thing. It may be so, but that is in effect what you have been doing; the pursuit of superstitious practices admits of no other explanation.

III. Sacrilege.—The third sin is sacrilege, which means to profane persons, things, or places consecrated to God.

When King Baltassar ordered the holy vessels to be brought from the Temple in Jerusalem, in order that he and his guests might use them at a feast as drinking vessels, he committed sacrilege, for he was profaning things dedicated to the service of God. Profanation of holy vessels, chalices, vestments, pictures, relics, or the words of Holy Scripture would likewise be sins of sacrilege.

When an envoy of Philip IV entered Italy and, breaking into the Papal palace with an armed force, struck Pope Boniface VIII in the face, he committed a sacrilegious act, because he was assaulting the representative of Christ, the most exalted monarch in Christendom. It would be a sin of the same kind to treat profanely a priest,

a monk, or any person consecrated to the service of God.

In the Second Book of the Macchabees (ch. vi.) we read that King Antiochus of Syria commanded that the temple of the true God in Jerusalem should be used for feasting and reveling, heathen processions, and sacrifices to the heathen gods. This was a sin of sacrilege, because he profaned a place consecrated to God.

Holy Scripture and the Church teach us, and our own reason will easily convince us, that a sin of sacrilege is also a sin against the true worship of God. If the profanation of a holy person, a holy place or thing deserves the name of sacrilege, what shall we say of the profanity of receiving the sacraments unworthily? And if it be sacrilege to receive any one of the sacraments unworthily, how great a sin must it be to receive holy communion, if we are conscious of not being in a state of grace. For by so doing we profane the body of Christ, that sacred humanity, which is more closely consecrated to Almighty God than anything in heaven or on earth.

IV. Simony.—Simony is the name given to the sin of buying or selling holy things, holy orders, Church offices, priestly authority and powers, with any temporal benefits attached to them, for money or money's worth. This sin is so called from one Simon, known as Simon Magus, who, seeing St. John and St. Peter laying hands on the people to confirm them, "was astonished to see the signs and exceeding great miracles which were done." He offered money to the apostles, saying, "Give me also this power that on whomsoever I shall

lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost." But Peter said to him: "Keep thy money to thyself to perish with thee, because that thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Simony at bottom is a form of sacrilege, for it is certainly a slight to God to consider that His supernatural gifts and graces could have an equivalent in money.

Idolatry and simony are sins which are hardly likely to come our way. Superstition, on the contrary, is all around us. But we shall be able to avoid all the sins against the first commandment if we seek the honor of God in all things, in our thoughts, our words, our works, in life, in suffering, in death, and in eternity. Amen.

SERMON XIII

On Honoring and Invoking the Saints

"Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened" (*Ps.* cxxxviii. 17).

So far we have considered what is commanded by the first commandment—the inward and outward worship due to God; and those things which it forbids—all sins which in any way detract from the divine honor and worship. But we have not yet come to the end of our explanations on this commandment; for besides the honor we owe to God Himself we must also pay honor and worship to the saints, who are the friends of God, and to their pictures and relics. The catechism tells us that "the first commandment does not forbid the honoring of the saints, but, on the contrary, approves of it; because by honoring the saints, who are the chosen friends of God, we honor God Himself." We see from this passage that it is right we should

I. Honor the saints.
II. Pray to them.

We will take these two points for the subject of our instruction to-day.

I

It is right for us to pay honor and worship to the saints; in so doing we are doing what is good and pleasing to God. How do we know and prove

this? In the first place, the Church has always expressly taught it, setting us the example by the honor she herself pays to the saints; the Doctors of the Church have all been unanimous on this point; and the faithful have ever been zealous in the practice of this teaching. But there are further reasons; let us come to the primary grounds on which the practice and teaching of the Church are founded. Why is it right to honor the saints?

(a) Because the Lord God Himself honors them. This is reason enough to overthrow all possible objections. God Himself honors them. The saints, while they were still on earth, served and worshiped God, their creator and redeemer, by their work, their sufferings, their virtues and miracles, by death, and in many cases by martyrdom. Now, when they have entered into eternity God in His turn gives them honor.

"Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify." And truly God does exalt and glorify them. Their names are inscribed in the book of life, they dwell in the house of His majesty, and are admitted to the company of the blessed. They join in the chorus of heavenly praise and constantly behold the countenance of the most high God. The Holy Scripture tells us God has made them to be the pillars of His kingdom. He has given them a new name, He has crowned them with the crown of life, and He has glorified many of them after their death here on earth by the continual miracles He works in their name. If God honors the saints is He likely to forbid us to do so, too? He has set us an example and He

wants us to follow it. He Himself has given them a new name, and therefore He will permit us to call them saints. He has admitted them to His dwellings; shall we not, then, admit their pictures to our houses? He has crowned them with the crown of life, and we symbolize this by representing them in pictures surrounded with a halo.

The enemies of the Church say that by paying honor to the saints we detract from the worship that is due to God, but this is quite untrue. There is a double difference between the honor we pay to God and that which we give to His saints. We worship God as the highest, the supreme Being, and we pay Him that honor which belongs to God alone. We worship the saints as the servants and friends of God. Only a king or a queen deserves the title of "Majesty," and it is only given to sovereigns; but no king grudges to his ministers titles of honor and marks of esteem; only they must not be treated as royal personages. In the next place, we worship God for His infinite perfections which emanate from Himself; we honor the saints on account of their graces and merits, which they have derived from God. In praising the light of the moon we are also praising the sun, for it is from the sun that the moon derives her light. And so in worshiping the saints we worship God also, for all they have and are comes from Him.

(b) Now let us consider another reason. The Scriptures, which are the inspired word of God, speak in many places in language of praise and honor of the saints. In Ecclesiasticus six consecutive chapters are devoted solely to the praise

of the great and holy men of the Old Testament. The first words are these: "Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation." Then follow the praises of Henoch, who was translated into Paradise; Noe, who was found perfect and just; Abraham, the great father of a multitude of nations, whose like there was not found, and who kept the Law of the Most High; Isaac, to whom the Lord gave the blessing of all nations; Moses, to whom He gave commandments and to whom He showed His glory; Aaron, to whom He gave the priesthood of the nation; Josue, who was valiant in war, the successor of Moses; Samuel, the beloved of the Lord his God, who anointed princes over his people; David, who slew Goliath, the giant, and who played with lions as with lambs; Solomon, who was filled as a river with wisdom; Elias, who shut the heavens and brought down fire; Ezechiel, who saw the chariot of cherubim. If the Holy Spirit thus praises the saints of the Old Law in the Scriptures, are we not also right in praising the saints of the New Law? May we not say that they are beloved of God, made perfect by grace, translated into paradise, and crowned by God? We can not doubt it. And if the Blessed Virgin while still on earth called forth words of praise from St. Elizabeth, may we not, now that she is in heaven, echo the same utterance: "Blessed art thou amongst women"?

(c) If these arguments are not enough to convince us, we have still the example of this world before us, for the world, too, pays reverence to its heroes. The great men of this world are

praised and honored in writing and by speech, and their portraits are exhibited and admired. Memorials are erected in every country to dead kings and queens who have ruled wisely; streets are named after some celebrated man of science, musician, painter, poet, or discoverer; in fact, all the great spirits of each age receive some public tribute of this kind, and they are spoken of in flattering terms, such as "lights of science," "ornaments to their country." If the world treats its heroes so, are we not justified in paying honor to the heroes of virtue, the saints, who overcame themselves, and who have shown us the way to heaven? Are the inhabitants of heaven less worthy of honor than the people of this world? We can see, then, clearly enough that it is a right, and a wholesome thing, to pay honor and worship to the saints.

II

We now come to the further question, whether it is right, not only to honor the saints, but also to pray to them. The Church teaches that it is right and good for us to pray to the saints in order to obtain their intercession. Let us consider what ground there is for this teaching; one might sum it all up briefly by saying there is nothing against it and everything to support it.

(a) To pray to the saints is the universal custom of the faithful; the traditions of the Church show it to be a very old practice, as do also the words of Holy Scripture, and daily experience proves that the saints are not invoked in vain. Let us see what we can find in the Scriptures to

support this teaching. In the second Book of Machabees we are told how Judas Machabeus on the eve of battle with a very powerful enemy encouraged his soldiers by telling them of a dream in which he saw Onias, who had been high priest, holding up his hands and praying for all the people of the Jews. Then there appeared to him another man "admirable for age and glory." Onias explained who this was, saying: "This is a lover of his brethren, and of the people of Israel: this is he that prayeth much for the people, and for all the holy city, Jeremias, the prophet of God." This was a saint of the Old Law, appearing to Machabeus, the captain of the Jews. And he was praying, praying much; although he had departed this life he was praying in limbo. For whom? For the people to whom in life he had belonged, and for the holy city whose destruction he had foretold and witnessed. Now, if the saints of the Old Law prayed for their people, may we not expect that the saints of the New Law do no less? And if they do indeed intercede for us are we not right to invoke their intercession?

St. Paul in his Epistles makes frequent mention of his prayers for the brethren and repeatedly asks them to pray in their turn for him. Was St. Paul doing an extraordinary thing in begging the prayers of the faithful, of men still living on earth? No, indeed, we can not attempt to criticize this practice of St. Paul. Well, now, if it be a right thing to ask the prayers of living men, sinners still, whose salvation is not even yet assured, it can not be otherwise than right to ask the prayers of the saints in heaven. Can death have

diminished the power of their intercession? On the contrary, it must be increased and not lessened. Have they no inclination to pray for us? We can not think so, since they have now attained the end to which their prayers for themselves were directed. Nor can it be that they are severed from us now, for in heaven and on earth all souls take part in the communion of saints. Clearly, everything supports the view that it is right to pray to the saints and invoke their intercession.

(b) There is nothing to be said against this teaching, for all the objections that have been raised against it are absolutely empty and futile.

1. It is said sometimes that it is a useless practice, for the saints know nothing of us and do not hear our prayers. Well, we know that Our Lord said: "There is more joy among the angels of heaven upon one sinner that does penance than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." Now if the angels have so full a knowledge of all that goes on amongst us, and of what goes on within each of us, is it improbable that the saints also share this knowledge? They see God face to face, and it would be presumption to attempt to limit or define the knowledge that they acquire in the light of His countenance.

2. It is said, also, that to pray to the saints is not allowable, because it assumes them to be mediators between God and man. St. Paul said, "There is but one mediator, Jesus Christ." This is a true saying and it remains true in spite of the invocation of the saints, for they are not mediators, and we have "but one mediator, Jesus Christ." A mediator is one who promotes a rec-

onciliation between the offender and the offended. He must be in close touch with both; and in this respect Christ is the only conceivable mediator between humanity and the Godhead, because He partakes of the nature of both; He is true God and true man. A mediator applies himself to discover where the offense lies; in this respect it is clear enough that we sinners are the offenders, and it is God we have offended. The chief duty of a mediator is to decide what form of atonement shall be offered to the offended person. In this sense, too, Christ only is our mediator, for He offered up His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. He is the mediator between God and each and every man, even those whom we now honor as saints. We have no idea of looking upon the saints as mediators in any such sense as this, and the most we ask of them is to intercede for us. Moses was regarded as a mediator in this sense, speaking to God for the people of Israel; and he is spoken of as a mediator in the Old Testament.

3. It is also urged that it is at least superfluous to ask the saints to pray for us, since God can receive our prayers Himself and loves us more and hears us more readily than they do. Quite true; but it is also true that God loves the saints more than He loves us, the sinners, and their prayers are more acceptable to Him than ours; so that our prayers united to those of the saints will surely gain in power. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." If this is true of two or three gathered together on earth, will it not also

be true when prayers are offered together, both in heaven and on earth? God Himself recommended the friends of Job to ask Job to pray for them. Let us, therefore, resolve to pay honor to the saints by praising them and invoking their prayers for us, by imitating their virtues and by celebrating their feasts. First and foremost, let us honor the Blessed Virgin, full of grace, of virtue, and of sorrows, mother of God and queen of heaven; and after her, her holy spouse St. Joseph, and our patron saints. Let us remember also the saints whose relics are preserved in our churches. By so honoring them we shall make to ourselves friends in heaven who will not forget us in our needs; friends who will come to our aid in times of sorrow; unchangeable friends whose prayers have great power with God, and will help us to attain eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XIV

On Honoring Holy Pictures, Images, and Relics

"Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing" (*Ex.* xx. 4).

IN ORDER to complete our instructions on the first commandment, we have still two points to consider:

I. The veneration of images.
II. The veneration of relics.

I

What do we mean by holy pictures and images? We mean representations of sacred personages or events, whether made in metal, gold, silver, or iron; in wood or in marble; or painted on linen or paper or glass.

We have many such representations of the Holy Trinity. God the Father we usually see as a venerable old man, in token of His eternity; in one hand He holds the terrestrial globe, signifying that He is the creator, ruler, and supporter of the world; while, the scepter in His other hand and the crown on His head are symbolic of His power and majesty. Beside Him the Son of God made man is generally depicted in His human form; and the Holy Ghost under the appearance of a dove.

Again we find our divine Saviour Jesus Christ in pictures, as the infant in the crib, or as a boy in the temple; we see Him teaching the populace,

carrying His cross, crucified, or risen again from the dead, sitting at the right hand of the Father, or in His character of judge of the world.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is represented under a great variety of aspects and circumstances. Sometimes she is conversing with the messenger of God, the Archangel Gabriel, or, again, kneeling at the crib; sometimes she is seen as the Mother of Sorrows at the foot of the cross, or sometimes radiant in the glory of heaven; but, most often, we venerate her simply as the mother of God, holding her divine Son in her arms.

As regards the apostles in the same way St. Peter is depicted with the keys, St. Paul with the sword, and the other apostles and martyrs generally with the particular instrument that has served in their martyrdom; bishops are recognizable by their crozier or pastoral staff; while holy confessors, hermits, and virgins are each indicated by some one or other conventional attribute.

One can say in truth that sculptors and painters at all times have looked upon the delineation of these sacred subjects as the highest expression of their art, and that much of the best artistic work of every epoch in all countries has been produced in trying to give a concrete form to these ideals of holiness.

But let us pass on further. The Church has always made use of such representations of Christ, of Our Lady, and of the saints to adorn the house of God, placing them on the altars, walls, and pillars of her churches; burning lamps and candles before them; decorating them with flowers; providing prie-dieus on which to kneel

and honor them. Moreover, the use by the faithful of pictures and images of a sacred nature to embellish their private dwellings has always also had the entire sanction of the Church, while she further encourages the wearing of medals and the keeping of small holy pictures in prayer-books. In the earliest times, when the Church was very destitute indeed, and often was driven to hold her services in miserable underground chambers and galleries, she did not leave these wretched places entirely without decoration. We possess evidence that she tried as well as she could to adorn their walls with pictures out of the Bible history. No wonder that at a later period the arts vied with one another in glorifying God and the saints by means of painting and sculpture. It is clear, therefore, that the Church has always entirely approved and sanctioned the use and veneration of images, and when in the eighth century one of the emperors of Constantinople for some unknown reason ordered all pictures and images to be destroyed, cruelly persecuting and even putting to death those who opposed him, the Pope and his representatives were ready to endure every form of persecution and suffering in resisting him, not fearing the enmity of the four great emperors who successively emulated each other in this policy of destruction. Many holy people gladly suffered martyrdom sooner than give up the principle involved. At the second Council of Nice the teaching of the Church on this subject was solemnly defined and was further ratified and confirmed by the Council of Trent.

The veneration of images is, therefore, fully

sanctioned by custom and by the teaching of the Church, and is entirely in agreement with natural feeling on the subject. Does any one find fault with the widespread dissemination of the pictures of kings and heroes and of great men in general? On the contrary, would it not be considered highly unbecoming to treat such pictures disrespectfully. When the inhabitants of Antioch threw down the statue of the consort of the reigning Emperor Theodosius, that ruler, habitually so benevolent and mild, was on the point of ordering the destruction of the entire city.

It is useless to object to the veneration of holy pictures by replying that God Himself in the first commandment has said: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing," for though this is so we know that He added immediately, "to adore it." It was clearly not God's intention to forbid the making and use and veneration of images, for it was by His express command that the figures of two cherubim were placed upon the Ark of the Covenant. Here we have images in the Temple, in the very Holy of Holies, made and placed there in accordance with God's definite instructions. In the same way Moses erected the brazen serpent in the desert. This also was an image, and only those who looked upon it with faith were saved.

From all this we are able to appreciate the answer given by the catechism to the question: "Why is it right to show respect to the pictures and images of Christ and His saints?" "It is right to show respect to the pictures and images of Christ and His saints because they are the representations and memorials of them." The honor

which we show to pictures and images is not directed to the inanimate object itself, but passes beyond it to the person it represents; just as the desecration of a picture is not aimed at the lifeless canvas, but is meant to dishonor him whom it portrays. But this is not all. The catechism further teaches that we make use of these pictures and images to put us in mind of Jesus Christ, His blessed Mother, and the saints, and most certainly if used with devotion they may be of the greatest benefit in this way. Not only do they give pleasure to the eye and the senses and, like all that is beautiful, recreate the heart and the mind, but they recall to those who gaze upon them the persons delineated, their life and sufferings, their achievements and virtues, their death, it may be even their martyrdom. The thought of them inspires us with admiration and awakens in us a desire to imitate them. No one with the least Christian feeling could contemplate the picture of the crucified Saviour, for instance, without feeling moved to gratitude and love; or that of the Mother of Sorrows without experiencing emotions of the deepest pity. Let us, then, show great reverence to the pictures of Our Saviour and His holy Mother, and make a place for them on the walls of our home. What we think of most fondly we like to have continually before our eyes. What, then, can we think of those Catholics in whose houses we see neither crucifix nor sacred pictures, but whose walls are covered with representations of half-naked women, race-horses, and dogs!

II

Not only do we honor pictures and images in the Catholic Church, we also venerate relics of the saints, that is to say, either fragments of their bodies, their bones, or objects that have been intimately connected with them, such as their prayer-books, their rosaries, their crucifixes. This practice finds its justification in Holy Scripture. When the children of Israel departed out of Egypt, they carried with them the bones of the patriarch Joseph. Surely this was venerating his relics. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that when St. Paul was at Ephesus the people took his handkerchiefs and aprons and laid them on the sick and their diseases were healed by them; and, further, that in Jerusalem the sick were carried on their beds into the street in order that St. Peter's shadow should fall upon them as he passed, and so they might be delivered from their infirmities (*Acts* chap. v., xix.). Could a less substantial or more elusive or more trivial relic of a saint be found than his shadow, and yet it was powerful to heal. Here, then, we have instances of public veneration of relics by the early Christians; and God Almighty, by giving healing virtue to these relics, seemed on His side to grant public sanction to such veneration. We know at what cost, and in face of how many dangers, the faithful used to seek to obtain possession of the bodies of the martyrs, and with what care they preserved them. In the second century the Christians of Smyrna collected the remains of the martyred Bishop Polycarp, looking upon them as more precious than gold or precious stones; and

in the succeeding centuries we have evidence in abundance that the possession of the relics of saints was eagerly coveted by the early Christians, who kept them enclosed in costly shrines and reliquaries, treating them with the utmost reverence, and often carrying them with them into the most distant parts of the world.

The catechism asks, "Does the first commandment forbid us to honor relics?" and answers, "The first commandment does not forbid us to honor relics, because relics are the bodies of the saints, or objects directly connected with them or with Our Lord."

To sum up briefly, we venerate the relics of the saints, and they deserve our veneration, on account of what they have been in the past. What have they been? They have formed part of the habitation in which immortal and saintly souls have lived, worked and suffered—temples of the Holy Ghost. Do we not look with reverence on the ruins of a church? Further, we honor relics because of what awaits them in the future. What will be their ultimate destiny? They will not always remain what they are now; they will rise again to live forever in eternal beauty, radiance, and happiness. Moreover, we honor relics because of what they are. And what are they? Dust and ashes, it is true, but pledges of our participation in the communion of saints. The bodies of many saints have borne testimony to the wonderful power of God, by which they have been preserved from corruption after death; while others are the instruments of the divine goodness, bringing to men comfort and help and healing. Who can fail

to call to mind the miracles wrought by means of the relics of St. Hubert or St. Apollinaris; or the oil which flows out of the grave of St. Walburga; or the blood of St. Januarius, which regularly, at stated times, is seen to liquefy anew.

Let us, therefore, honor relics, particularly those which are deposited in this church. We will pray to these holy patrons of our Church, asking them to obtain for us, members of this congregation, all those spiritual and temporal blessings which we desire, and of which we have need. Amen.

SERMON XV

On Profane Words and Blasphemy

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (*Ex.* xx. 7).

The first commandment, which we have considered exhaustively, commands us to reverence and worship God, and forbids all sins against the honor due to Him. The second commandment tells us we must reverence not only God Himself, but His very name. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The catechism opens its explanations on this subject by asking: "What are we commanded by the second commandment?" "We are commanded to speak with reverence of God and of the saints, and of all holy things, and to keep our lawful oaths and vows." If, then, it commands reverence, it follows that it forbids all irreverence, and the catechism goes on to define its meaning more clearly by the question: "What does the second commandment forbid?" "The second commandment forbids all false, rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths, blasphemy, cursing, and profane words."

We will devote our instruction to-day to considering, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what is meant by profane words, and what is the nature of the sin of blasphemy.

I

We profane the name of God in some measure whenever we pronounce it irreverently, or in-

voke it in anger, or from habit, or astonishment, or in jest; in a word, whenever we call upon the sacred name without adequate reason; and this applies not only to the divine name itself, but to the names of the saints and of all holy things. Among the holy names which must never be profaned by careless and irreverent speaking stands, of course, in the first place, that of God Himself, and those of the three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the names of Jesus, Christ, Redeemer, Saviour, etc., but this is not all. Similar respect should also be shown to the names of the saints, such as Mary, Mother of God, Joseph, etc., as well as of things which are intimately connected with the worship of God, such as sacrament, cross, heaven, and many other words.

Do we mean by this that it is always a sin to pronounce these words? By no means. There is no sin in using these sacred names with a right and sufficient motive. We make use of them in prayer and song, in sermons and instructions; we speak them in greeting, and in a general way, whenever the context of what we wish to say requires them. But we do, or at least may, commit a sin by introducing them into our conversation for any inadequate reason, merely that in moments of excitement our stammering tongues may have some strong or startling expression in which to vent our feelings of astonishment, amusement, or anger, as the case may be. You may be inclined to ask why the mere pronouncing of holy names should be a sin, but it is very easy to see why. It is not in any sense compatible with the rev-

erence due to sacred things that we should speak of them lightly, cheapening them to suit our own vanity or convenience. A language contains words and names that should be sacred, as well as those for every-day use, just as in a well-equipped house we find vessels and utensils of every kind and description for eating, drinking, cooking, or for mere ornament. They are made out of wood, clay, stone, iron, glass, copper, silver, or gold, as the case may be, and each object, whether it be rare and precious, or common and of little value, whether it be durable or fragile, is used in its proper place and according to the purpose which it is meant to serve; the common vessels being employed at the every-day meals, while those of more choice fabric are reserved for important occasions. The Book of Esther relates that King Assuerus in the third year of his reign made a great feast and invited all the mighty men of his day, in order to display the riches and magnificence of his kingdom, and that at this banquet the guests drank out of golden cups. Such magnificence was quite suitable at a banquet given by a great king for the express purpose of showing his power and splendor; but what would any mistress of a house say if the servants wished to use the best plate every day? She would object that such things were not for common use, but were to be reserved for great occasions. Well, then, ordinary common words may be used in every-day conversation, but the sacred name of God, the names of the saints and of holy things are only to be introduced when there is adequate reason for doing so. To do so without such a

reason is a sin which must be carefully avoided because it very easily becomes a habit, and other people are easily led to imitate us. Holy Scripture says that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain." We pray in the Our Father "hallowed be Thy name," and yet often it is we ourselves who dishonor and profane the sacred name which we profess to venerate.

II

In general, of course, the mere profane mention of the name of God is not to be considered a sin, much less a grievous sin. A far more serious offense against the second commandment is the sin of blasphemy. This is so important that we must consider it in detail with regard to (1) its nature, (2) its gravity, (3) the punishment due to it.

1. The Nature of the Sin of Blasphemy.—By blasphemy is meant contemptuous and abusive language uttered against God, the saints, or holy things. If we accuse a man of any failing or vice we injure him in proportion as what we say of him is true or untrue. What is only a very slight shortcoming, or no shortcoming at all, in one may be a very serious fault in another. For instance, to say of a young child that he is ignorant is no calumny; but to accuse any priest or bishop of ignorance would be to speak injuriously of him, because in such a one ignorance would often be criminal. Now in God all perfections are united in an infinite degree, and to attribute to Him by thought, word, or deed the

smallest imperfection is to be guilty of blasphemy. If any one were to say: "God is not just, He does not know all things, He does not trouble Himself about the fate of mankind," or "He is powerless to help us," he would be blaspheming against God. To speak contemptuously of the saints or of holy things may also be blasphemy and, as we have already pointed out, we can be guilty of blasphemy not only by words, but by thought and by deed. For instance, to spit upon the cross, to tread the crucifix under foot, to shake a fist threateningly against heaven, is to express deliberate contempt, and to be guilty of blasphemy.

Those who are most likely to make themselves guilty of this sin are generally, on the one hand, those who abound in good fortune of every kind, and who in their pride begin to think that they are entitled to dictate to the Almighty Himself; or those, on the other hand, who plunged in sorrow and misery of every sort and description feel they have lost both desire and hope for anything the future can bring. Then there are absolute infidels and unbelievers who glory in speaking with contempt of everything we hold sacred; there are the people who use blasphemous expressions of speech without realizing their meaning, simply from force of habit; and, finally, there are those souls who, out of bitterness and resentment of heart, lift up their voices deliberately to insult God and everything connected with His service.

2. The Grievousness of the Sin of Blasphemy. —St. Jerome writes: "Nothing is more terrible

than the sin of blasphemy, compared to which every other sin seems in comparison less grievous." These words are startling, but they are true. Thieving, robbery, envy, adultery, murder, are offenses of a truly grievous and terrible nature. But blasphemy is more dreadful than any one of them. Do you want proof of it?

Consider first against whom it is directed. It is aimed straight at the honor of God Himself. To break the laws of a king, to insult one of his subjects or officials or friends is to insult the king himself. But to aim a blow at or to lay hands on the person of a king is to be guilty of high treason, and the laws of the ancients even forbade intercession to be made with the king on behalf of such a one. No doubt other sins offend God, but they offend Him indirectly; they are not committed for the purpose of offending Him. But blasphemy is aimed directly at the incomprehensible and immeasurable majesty of God which can never be sufficiently praised, and before whom the angelic choirs continually sing "Holy, Holy, Holy." Who among the saints of God would wish to intercede for such a traitor as a blasphemer against the divine majesty of their king? (4 *Kings* xix.)

Consider next who it is that is guilty of blasphemy: "Who is he that speaks blasphemy?" cried King David. From a pagan, an unbeliever, a Mohammedan, it might pass: "If my enemies had despised Me, I might have endured it." But who is he that speaks blasphemy? Is it not intolerable that those who thus offend are often Christians baptized and brought up in the Church

of God, His children by grace, initiated by Him into the divine mysteries, nourished at His table, heirs to His Kingdom? One might almost say such a sin is more grievous than that of the damned, whose most heinous offense consists in cursing and reviling God. But they do it only in thought, while Christians here on earth are often guilty of it in word and deed. The inhabitants of hell blaspheme God, it is true, but it is while enduring the rigorous punishments of the divine justice; they blaspheme God in His vengeance. But Christians often do so when He is engaged in heaping benefits upon them. Which think you is the worse?

Consider, finally, the consequences of blasphemy. Blasphemous words are generally spoken in the presence of others, who are quick to pick them up. The young learn them from the old; servants from their masters; friends from their companions. In any place or neighborhood where blasphemous expressions are usual one may confidently assert that they will be kept alive by thousands of tongues for an incalculable number of years: "For the name of God through you is blasphemed." About forty years ago I came across a man who had no other knowledge of French than a few words which for me had no meaning. Some time later in a learned book I came across these same words in a list of blasphemous expressions formerly in current use in France, and then the thing became clear to me. During the wars of Napoleon at the beginning of the last century some French soldiers had been quartered in the district this man came from.

Their oaths and blasphemies had been picked up by the Germans, among whom they lived, and it is probable that the poison has not died out to this day among those who were thus infected.

3. The Punishment of Blasphemy.—The punishment meted out to all sin must correspond in some degree with its grievousness, and because the sin of blasphemy is aimed directly at the honor due to God Himself we often, though not always, find that He punishes it on the spot. Entire books might be written full of true and credible instances of blasphemers who have been struck down by the hand of God with the blasphemous words still on their lips; whose voices were silenced, whose breath failed before they had time to complete their sentence, who finished in hell the blasphemy they had begun to utter on earth. Under the Old Law the punishment for a blasphemer was death by stoning, because such a one was considered too vile to be touched by the hands of men, and the whole community took part in carrying out the penalty, in order that each one might have the opportunity of proclaiming his horror and detestation of the sin. The blasphemer was covered and buried in stones, so that no eye should be obliged to look upon him any more.

None of the excuses offered by those who seek to minimize the guilt of the sin of blasphemy are of the least value. Many people say: "I have become so accustomed to these blasphemous expressions that they escape me without my knowing it." This may serve as a palliation in the case of those who are earnestly striving to get rid of the habit, but it is of no avail for men who uncon-

cernedly persevere in this fatal practice. Some say, "It is only in the excitement and heat of passion that I use such expressions." That may be. It is certainly worse to blaspheme God in cold blood than when carried away by the violence of anger, but blasphemy remains blasphemy, whether spoken in anger or not. Others protest, "I did not use such expressions purposely to insult God, I did not think of the meaning of what I was saying." I am quite willing to believe it, but, nevertheless, intention does not alter the nature of a blasphemy in itself; a heavy blow will kill a man just as well when it is unintentional as when dealt for the purpose of murdering him.

Therefore, let parents and children, masters and servants, guests and their entertainers, avoid all forms of blasphemy, for it is the last and most hideous offspring of all the other sins, and it is itself the mother of fresh evil. Let us resolve, therefore, to detest it from our hearts. Amen.

SERMON XVI

On Cursing

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (*Ex.* xx. 7).

THERE are five ways of profaning the name of God, namely: pronouncing it irreverently, blaspheming, cursing, sinful swearing, and breaking of vows. We considered sufficiently the two first of these sins last Sunday, examining in particular the nature of blasphemy, its gravity and its consequences.

We will now pass on to a very common offense, that of cursing, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will examine:

I. The nature of a curse.
II. The harm that it does.

I

To curse means to wish evil either to ourselves or to our neighbor. The essence of a curse lies in wishing evil to some one. Now what is this wishing of evil? It is simply to wish what is bad. To call down unhappiness, illness, death, or even eternal damnation upon any one is to curse that person. To wish evil, or to curse, are one and the same thing. This must be borne clearly in mind if we want to understand this sin and to distinguish it from others, for not only is it a very frequent offense, but it is one which is constantly confused with other quite different sins,

and called by a wrong name, just, for instance, as in some places we find pine-trees commonly described as firs.

A curse is accompanied almost invariably with an appeal to a higher power to give effect to the desires of the evil-wisher who will call in turn upon the power of God, or the Blessed Sacrament, or thunder, lightning, or the Cross to carry out his wicked designs. Here we have the reason why cursing is counted a sin against the second and not the fifth commandment, against which (if we consider the nature of a curse only from the point of view of the evil wish) it would appear to be more immediately directed.

II

It will not be out of place here to pass in review one or two of the reasons which should lead us to fear this sin, and to dread forming the habit of it.

1. He who utters a curse injures him to whom he wishes evil. "How can this be?" you will say. "Have evil words such power?" When God, wishing evil to any of His creatures, curses him, this curse is fulfilled quite as completely and surely as are the divine benedictions and blessings. The withering of the barren fig-tree followed immediately upon the curse our Saviour pronounced on it; at the last judgment as soon as Christ has said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," the gates of heaven will open to receive us; and when He pronounces the words, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," the damned will be swallowed up immediately in the pit of hell. God's

will, and therefore God's wishes, invariably come to pass. He is able, if He so wills, to lend this power to the wishes of any human creature. Does He ever do so? Not often assuredly. Under what circumstances, then, would God be most inclined to make good in this way the wishes of men for one another? He is certainly disposed to grant devout prayers offered for the good of others; and to pray for others is nothing more nor less than to desire blessings for them. Our Saviour Himself has told us more than once in the most explicit manner what the strength of such a prayer is; and never is the strength of prayer greater than when offered by men on behalf of those to whom they act in some special way as God's representatives. For this reason Catholics do well to be zealous in seeking the blessings of the Church, for the Church is the representative of Christ. Again, children are right in seeking the blessing of their parents in life and in death. Their parents take the place of God to their children. Now if the blessings or good wishes of those who represent God are possessed of such power, is it not possible that their curse or malediction may, under certain conditions, be equally efficacious? Noe cursed his son Cham, and it is alarming to contemplate how completely that curse was realized. Peter cursed Ananias and Sapphira for attempting to deceive the head of the Church, and on the instant his words were made good. Eliseus cursed the boys who had mocked God's prophet and they were devoured by wild beasts. The result of this is that the bare idea of there being even a remote possibility of our words coming

to fruition through the power of God should hold us back from ever uttering a word in malediction. Do I mean that maledictions are always realized? Most certainly not. If all the evil wishes which have risen up in men's hearts and been spoken by men's tongues had come true, the greater part of mankind would have been by this time struck by plague, sickness, and death, and be buried in hell. But, though all curses do not come true, we should carefully abstain from ever uttering one, and parents should be especially careful in this regard. Fathers could have no more bitter punishment to bear than to see such curses realized, and children should be earnestly solicitous on their side to deserve the blessing of their parents. "The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children; but the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation" (*Ecclus.* iii. 11).

2. If a curse is not capable in most cases of hurting those against whom it is pronounced, yet it invariably injures him who utters it, and it is a sorry sight to see people killing their souls with their own breath. Do we not commonly say that "curses come home to roost"? What, you exclaim, is a curse always a mortal sin? A curse, seriously meant, is always a grave sin, but I have not said that it is always a mortal sin. There are two cases when a curse can not be considered a mortal sin. The first is when an evil of a trivial kind only is called down upon our neighbor. But this excuse does not often hold good, it being very rarely the case that when a man wishes to curse another he contents himself by desiring trifling evils for him. No; he generally has recourse to

very big calamities, such as to see him overtaken by sickness and want, struck by lightning or plague, or even by death and damnation. The second plea for removing a curse out of the category of mortal sin is more often made use of. Men say: "Yes, it is true I have often, in cursing myself or my neighbor, been guilty of invoking terrible evils, if the things I have said be taken in their literal sense. The words roll off my tongue and out of my mouth before I know what I am doing, but the feelings of my mind and heart are not in the least in accord with their real meaning. I do not in the smallest degree realize or think of what I am saying, still less do I wish my words to come true." No doubt excuses such as these are often genuine and lessen to a great extent the gravity of the sin.

But to be in earnest in cursing and wishing evil to ourselves or another is a very great sin. It is hardly necessary to explain to you why it is so. We have learned from our Saviour's own lips that we must love our neighbor as ourself. This commandment is of the utmost importance: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; this is the greatest and the first commandment, and the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." To wish for others only what is good and all that is good, is the beginning of love; but a curse is the very opposite of love. It is to desire evil for another. It can be nothing less than a grave mortal sin to disregard and deliberately disobey this great commandment in so serious a matter.

3. A curse injures not only him against whom

it is directed, and the person who utters it, but it harms, perhaps more than any one else, those who listen to it. It is an incitement to evil and it sets a bad example; it is, morever, a fruitful source of scandal. How is it that we sometimes hear children uttering horrible curses almost before they have well cut their teeth? Because, unhappily, they have learned them where least of all they should have heard them, in their own homes, from their own parents. Why is it that certain forms of cursing are peculiar to certain places? Because they have been passed on from mouth to mouth till in the end no one can say with whom they originated or who was the first to repeat them. In this way the unholy heritage of evil words is handed on from one generation to another, from old age to youth.

4. One thing, however, aggravates, in the great majority of cases, the gravity of the sin we commit when we curse, namely, that almost invariably sacred names are profaned. In uttering a curse men scarcely ever content themselves with merely giving expression to their wicked desires; they nearly always accompany them by an appeal to some higher power to carry out and make good their evil wishes, calling upon the name of God, and of Christ, or the Blessed Sacrament, the Cross, thunder, lightning, and who knows what more besides? As St. Augustine says: "They appoint themselves judges over their neighbor, pronouncing judgment and passing sentence upon him, and, as they are not in a position to carry their decrees into effect they constitute God almighty executioner. He is to come to the rescue and with His powerful arm strike them with a

flash of lightning, a thunderbolt from heaven, or with fire from hell. Now, the judge is the person in authority, is he not? He pronounces the sentence which he leaves the executioner to carry out. So a man, when he curses anybody, pronounces his doom, and then calls upon God almighty and His saints to execute the designs of an angry, wicked, envious, revengeful heart. What an insult to the divine Goodness! Any man arrogating to himself the position of judge toward his fellowmen usurps the place of God, whom He relegates to the part of a mere hangman.

You will say: "I see, indeed, that cursing is a greater sin than many seem to realize, worse than I myself have ever thought it. But how can I cure myself of the habit? It has become a sort of second nature to me." That is the worst of it; it becomes so deeply rooted a habit that it is exceedingly difficult to overcome. "The tongue no man can tame." No man can tame it, that is true enough, but God can; pray to God and nerve yourself for the fight. "It is the part of man to prepare the soul" by endeavor, by watchfulness, by firm resolve, "and of the Lord to govern the tongue." Be on your guard, and if in spite of all your pains a curse should ever again pass your lips lay a penance on your tongue yourself, to bridle it, at least an Our Father or a Hail Mary. If you will only persevere in this way, you may be sure that you will never be guilty of a grievous sin of this nature, and you may, moreover, hope in time to conquer the evil habit completely. In this way will your tongue be purified and made worthy to praise and exalt God in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XVII

On Swearing

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (*Ex.* xx. 7).

THE course of these instructions is at present particularly concerned with offenses against the reverence due to the name of God, and it now brings us to the subject of sinful swearing. But, before embarking upon it, we must first consider:

I. The nature of an oath.
II. The object of an oath.
III. The lawfulness of an oath.

I

The catechism asks, "What is an oath?" and it answers, "An oath is the calling upon God to witness the truth of what we say."

In order to help us to understand clearly this definition we will picture to ourselves a public calamity of some kind, such for instance as an accident at sea, the loss of a ship. When such a thing happens it is always of the greatest importance to a number of people to learn from a reliable source something definite concerning the details of the occurrence. To ascertain, for example, the time, the place, the cause of the mishap, the names of the saved, as well as of those who were lost. Now it is only possible to do this by means of witnesses. If it is a case of the ship having gone to the bottom with all on board the

chances are that the calamity may have been witnessed by another vessel; or should there be any survivors of the wreck they will be in a position to give evidence. On being questioned they relate all they saw and heard, describing even the dying shrieks of the unfortunate victims. They give the name of the ship, state for what port it was bound, the course it was holding, the number of passengers it carried, and how many or how few were saved. But let us suppose that there is one single survivor only; he is then the sole witness of the occurrence. Is his testimony to be trusted? Perhaps not, especially if he be a stranger. Yet there is no human being to whom he can appeal for corroboration of his story. But he can appeal to divine corroboration. There is One to whom all things in heaven and on earth are present, who sees and knows and remembers everything that takes place, and who loves truth above all things. This witness is God almighty. Therefore, if this sole spectator of the shipwreck calls upon God to witness that he is speaking the truth, he has taken an oath and we accept his word much more readily in consequence.

A similar difficulty arises when it is a case of making a promise. When King Saul realized that David was to be his successor on the throne of Israel he exacted from him a solemn engagement that he would not seek to exterminate his race after him. David promised and swore to it. Saul could not see into the heart of David to make sure that he meant to keep his word, but God searches the heart and the reins. He knows what passes in the innermost recesses of the mind; He

is witness of interior as well as exterior things. For this reason Saul demanded from David a promise on oath: "Swear to me" (1 *Kings* xxiv. 22). If a man swears to keep his word we are bound to presume that he seriously and truthfully intends to keep it. Soldiers of old used to take an oath of fidelity to the colors; the State requires from its servants the oath of office, the priests of the Church attest their belief on oath.

We take an oath, therefore, when we call upon God to witness either that what we say is true, or that our promise is sincerely given. We can do this in different ways. Either we make express mention of the name of God in the way St. Paul repeatedly does in his epistles, "God is my witness"; or we can call upon some name very intimately connected with the Divinity. It is an oath to say, for instance: "by the Blessed Sacrament," "by the holy cross," "by all the saints," "by heaven." But it is not an oath to say "really," "truly," "on my honor." Such expressions contain no appeal to almighty God to witness what we say.

Whether we swear solemnly before the crucifix or with uplifted hand, or in presence of the Gospel book or relics or lighted candles, whether we kiss the Bible or whether we do not, the nature of the oath remains the same; nor does it make the smallest difference whether it be taken before a tribunal of justice, or in presence of a magistrate, or only to a private person; neither is it altered by the form of words we use. The essence of an oath consists in calling upon God to witness the truth of what we assert.

II

Now that we know the nature of an oath it will not be difficult to understand its purpose. The purpose is to win credence more readily and to establish the truth on a firmer footing. Why do men so often interlard their assertions with uncalled-for oaths? In order to give greater weight to their words and make them more readily believed. Why must a witness in a court of law always give his evidence on oath? In order to furnish a stronger guarantee of the truth of his statements. The oath is taken in the interests of truth. Now you may quite well object that though an oath calls upon God as witness, and that God knows everything, yet He on His side makes no response when appealed to; He gives no testimony and we are still as much in the dark as ever, regarding the sincerity or insincerity of whatever is being asserted. There are such things as false witnesses and false oaths. Is this not so? How then can you tell us that oaths are in the interests of truth? I will explain my meaning to you. Which would you consider the greater sin, a simple lie or a lie upon oath? Beyond all question, a lie upon oath is the greater sin. Which is worse, to tell a lie or to perjure one's self? To perjure one's self, most certainly. Lying and untruthfulness are sins of which all, young and old, are frequently guilty in the ordinary relations of life, and from which very few indeed entirely shrink. On the other hand, perjury is, of course, sometimes, but still only occasionally, committed, and then by very degraded people, by criminals; moreover, it is punished with a severity of which

it is not pleasant to think. In a word, then, lying is frequent; perjury is very rare. A lie is looked upon as a venial sin, perjury as a great crime; a lie goes unpunished, perjury is dealt with very rigorously, indeed. Therefore, though few people will allow a lie to stand in their way, nearly every one will hesitate before committing perjury. What guarantee of truth does the mere spoken word of any one give us? Very little, indeed, for so many people are liars. But what guarantee does an oath give? The strongest we can have, for very few men are so hardened as to look indifferently on the crime of perjury, and not to be deterred by its penalties. The fruit-trees of a public garden stand a very good chance of being rifled. Why so? Because there are so many dishonest people going about; neither is a garden, enclosed only by a low hedge, very secure, as it is easily accessible to any enterprising tramp. But a fruit-garden, with a high wall, surmounted with broken glass, or with wide moats full of water, and backed up by a man-trap or two, will be practically safe; he would be a dare-devil, indeed, who would attempt robbery under these circumstances. There can be no doubt that the oath in a very similar way operates in the interests of truth.

III

However effectual the means to a given end may appear to be we must, nevertheless, be sure that the means are justified. Are we allowed to call upon God as witness in this way? Is it lawful to swear or take an oath?

Undoubtedly, under certain conditions, to swear

is not only no sin, but is even a profession of faith, a token of our reverence for God. It helps to establish the truth, to protect the innocent, to punish wrong-doing, and to further the ends of justice. To appeal to almighty God as the highest and last witness at moments when mere human assurances seem inadequate is to acknowledge Him as the omniscient spectator of all that occurs, from whom nothing is hidden, not even the most secret dispositions of the heart. It is to recognize His omnipresence, in whose sight everything occurs that takes place in the universe; His holiness and truth, who loves truth and hates untruth; His justice, which will be wreaked on the perjurer, and His almighty power by which He is able to punish, not only in the next world, but even here in this life. In taking an oath we proclaim our belief not only in one, but in a number of the divine perfections, and those who exact the oath, as well as those who listen to it and put trust in it, are tacitly making the same profession of faith. The taking of an oath is one of the many ceremonies connected with the every-day business of life which is pleasing to God, and allowed by Him to His honor and glory.

But how does this agree with our Saviour's words: "But I say to you not to swear at all . . . but let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; and that which is over and above these is of evil" (*Matt.* v. 34, 37). Now there can be no doubt that our Saviour spoke in this way, and that His teaching is to be preferred far above the words of men. He would here seem distinctly to condemn swearing in any form, but such is in reality not the

case. Remark that His words to the apostles are: "Let your speech be yea, yea, and no, no," and He adds further on, "that which is over and above these is of evil." Our Saviour does not say it is evil, but that it is "of evil." Clearly, there is a distinction to be made here. Where does the difference lie? Well, a thing may be *of* evil without being in itself evil. One may say that the sacrament of penance is of evil, because it is the wrongdoing of men that has made it necessary; but it is not an evil; it was instituted by Christ to help in the extermination of sin. The science of medicine is of evil, arising from the many infirmities and diseases to which flesh is heir; but it is itself no evil, serving as it does to heal and to cure. So in the same way swearing or taking an oath is of evil, being the outcome of the deceitfulness of man. If men always invariably, under every circumstance, spoke the truth oaths would be superfluous; then our speech might be merely yes, yes, and no, no. This would be the better, the more desirable state of things, and the apostles and their successors were directed to strive to that end. The addition of the oath is of evil, a consequence of sin.

It becomes as clear as daylight that our Saviour did not condemn swearing as sinful when we find St. Paul in his epistles constantly making use of the words: "I call God to witness" (2 *Cor.* i. 23). Further he says: "For God making promise to Abraham, because He had no one greater by whom He might swear, swore by Himself" (*Heb.* vi. 13). Our last difficulty on this subject must disappear when we remember that our Saviour Him-

self with His own lips, in the presence of the assembled council, when challenged by the high-priest as to the truth of His own divinity, swore to it in the most solemn manner. The high-priest said, "I adjure Thee by the living God," which meant, "I require Thee to attest by an appeal to the living God, whether you be Christ, Son of the living God." And what answer did Christ make? Did He say: "It is not lawful to take an oath; I will not swear"? Not at all. He accepted the challenge and made the affirmation required.

And now, in closing our meditation, we may well make a resolution to avoid for our own part oaths that are rash and unnecessary. "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls" (*Ecclus.* xxiii. 9). Let us, then, look upon oaths as very sacred and serious things, so that if we should ever find ourselves obliged to take one, it may rank among those that serve the interests of truth and of justice, and which are in themselves acts of reverence to the thrice-holy God. Amen.

SERMON XVIII

On Swearing

"Thou shalt swear in truth, in judgment, and in justice" (*Jer.* iv. 2).

Last Sunday we considered the nature and object of an oath, and the circumstances under which it is lawful to swear. We now come to the different kinds of sinful swearing. The catechism asks: "What is necessary to make an oath lawful?" And it answers: "To make an oath lawful it is necessary that what we swear be true, and that there be a sufficient cause for taking an oath." This answer corresponds with the words in which God by the lips of the prophet Jeremias describes for us the characteristics of a holy and lawful oath: "Thou shalt swear in truth, in judgment, and in justice." "In truth"—whoever takes a false oath sins against truth. "In judgment"—to swear unnecessarily is to sin against good judgment. "In justice"—he sins against justice who swears to do evil or to avoid good. Let us to-day make our meditation on these three classes of sinful swearing, leaving that one which is mentioned the first to be considered the last.

I

"Thou Shalt Swear in Judgment."—This means that we are to exercise discrimination in taking an oath, determining carefully and with due deliberation whether it be lawful to take it

or not. We have sometimes to deal with matters so weighty, with questions of such gravity, and proceedings of so much importance that it does not seem out of keeping to call the holiest and highest of all witnesses, the omniscient God, to bear testimony to them. But every form of dress is not suitable for every occasion. What should we say of the bride who superintended the necessary operations in kitchen and cellar attired in bridal costume. We do not ornament implements and tools indiscriminately; a sword of state, for instance, is adorned with precious stones, which would be out of place on the hammer of a smith. Law suits are not heard haphazard before any tribunal. A quarrel involving a matter of a couple of shillings would not be tried before a judge of the high court. The name of God is the most sacred name in heaven and on earth, and it is a sin and an insult to the Almighty to call upon Him as a witness without necessity, in small, trivial matters, and for insufficient reasons. And yet this is just what we often do in the course of the frivolous chatter of our every-day conversation, and in connection with trifling business transactions, or in making assertions and protestations upon matters of no importance. We sin against the reverence due to God in so doing. In days gone by an oath was considered so solemn a thing that in certain places, when Christians were under the necessity of swearing to anything, they repaired to the church, remaining there without breaking their fast till the moment arrived for them to take the oath before the altar.

II

"Thou Shalt Swear in Justice."—The quality of justice is essential in any oath by which we call God to witness that we are giving our promise sincerely. "Thou shalt swear in justice" means that what we promise and swear must be good, just, and lawful. To promise to do what is wrong, unjust, and unlawful and to confirm such a promise by swearing to it is to violate the sanctity of an oath. The offense is equally great whether the oath is sincerely given or not, for it is obviously an open and direct insult to the Almighty to call upon Him to witness a determination to act sinfully. Unhappily such offenses are but too common. Have you not sometimes heard an angry man swearing in his excitement never to forget the wrong done him, never to forgive it, but to pay it back three-fold. Godless people have been known to swear that they will never again set foot in a church or go to the sacraments. In other words, they call upon God to witness and guarantee the commission of their sin and ask Him to co-operate in it. The unlawfulness of such an oath is self-evident. When St. Paul was in Jerusalem more than forty Jews swore neither to eat nor drink till they had put him to death. Their oath was a sin, for they called upon God to witness their determination to do murder. Were they obliged to keep their oath? Not at all. Nothing can ever find us under an obligation to commit sin.

III

Thou Shalt Swear in Truth.—This means that what we swear to must be true, and that what

we promise under oath we must sincerely purpose to perform, fulfilling it faithfully if it be in our power. To swear what we know to be untrue, or to swear to that as true which we are not certain about, is to swear a false oath and to commit perjury. Similarly, to make a promise under oath with the intention of not fulfilling it is to be guilty of a false oath. It can hardly be necessary to point out that perjury and false oaths are grievous sins; by them God is solemnly renounced, His sanctity, omniscience, and justice are mocked, and His vengeance called down upon the offender. The perjurer sins against God, against himself, and against his neighbor. Let us see how.

1. Against God, for he calls God to witness his lie; and what can be further removed from untruth than God, the eternal truth? By so doing it is literally true to say that he mocks God, for what does mockery mean? It is to honor some one outwardly by word and deed, but in such a way as to convey the opposite. We are told that the soldiers of Pilate mocked our Saviour. They put a purple mantle round His shoulders, and, placing a scepter in His hand, seated Him on a throne; then they bent the knee before Him and hailed Him as their King: "Hail, King of the Jews!" They gave Him kingly honors, a royal mantle, a scepter, a throne, the title of king: but did they mean to honor Him? Quite the contrary; it was all done in such a way as to constitute the most deadly insult. The royal mantle was old and dirty, dusty and torn; the crown was made of thorns; the scepter was a reed; the salutations and bows were accompanied with expres-

sions of the utmost scorn. "And spitting upon Him they took the reed and struck His head." They mocked the Saviour. He who commits perjury behaves toward God in the same way. He appeals to the omniscient God to witness a lie. Outwardly he calls God omniscient, but in his heart he says: "He does not know." He takes God, who loves truth and detests falsehood, as a witness, while inwardly thinking: "It does not matter to Him whether I tell the truth or not." He addresses himself to God as to one who has power to punish lying and false swearing and who will exercise His power; but in reality he says to himself: "He will not punish me; He can not, He will not." O terrible sin of perjury, by which the omniscient, all-holy, almighty God is mocked! "Be not deceived," says St. Paul, "God is not mocked."

2. The perjurer sins also against himself. Most oaths are so worded that in taking them a man by swearing falsely calls down upon himself with his own lips the punishment of God. The judicial oath ends with the words "so help me God." What does that mean? It means that what I say is as true as that God will help me; or, if what I say is not true then may God not help me; I give up all claim to His grace and support; or, more simply still, if what I say is not true may God punish me; I appeal to Him as a just judge, the revenger and punisher of perjury. Oh, how can a man about to commit perjury pronounce such words? What temerity he shows who, swearing thus falsely, dares to mock God and insult Him in so outrageous a manner, while with the

same breath he calls upon Him to punish him! It is as much as to say: "Punish me if you can." No wonder that perjury so often meets with retribution even in this world: "And if he swear in vain he shall not be justified; for his house shall be filled with his punishment"; and, moreover, "A scourge shall not depart from his house." Unhappy the home on which the curse of God falls! Unhappy the inhabitants of the house, the family who live where the curse of God dwells, devastating everything! God always has power and opportunity to punish the perjurer. A parish priest relates the following experience. He was called one day to the deathbed of a man who was universally believed, and, with good reason, to have taken a false oath. The priest endeavored, but without success, to bring it home to him; but as the man lay in his death agony the three fingers of the right hand became raised as though to take an oath and it was impossible to bend them back into their place again. So with his fingers in that position, as if in the act of swearing, he died, and so he was laid in his coffin and buried.

3. Very frequently, too, the man who commits perjury injures his neighbor, causing him by false swearing to lose lawsuits which he would otherwise have won, and making him suffer in his honor, his fortune, his liberty, and even his life. By perjury men close up, as it were, the roads that lead out of sin to God. For before they can return to God what is required of them? Contrition? Confession? More, much more, than this. They must rectify the injustice which they

have caused by their false oath. They must make full restitution to their neighbor for the loss of reputation, fortune, and liberty he has suffered. Often this can only be done by acknowledging the sin, and facing the whole shame and all the penalties of perjury; so thus, as you see, a mountain of difficulty is raised which can seldom, if ever, be smoothed away.

Let us end our meditation by saying to God: O Lord, holy is Thy name; far too holy to be used by me for swearing on all occasions. Grant me to put far from me all unnecessary, superfluous, and ill-considered oaths. Following the instructions of Holy Scripture: "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls." I will take an oath only when the higher authorities demand it, and always in truth, in judgment and in justice, to the honor of Thy name, the thrice-holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

SERMON XIX

On Vows

"If thou hast vowed anything to God defer not to pay it" (*Eccles.* v. 3).

THERE is another way of profaning the name of God yet to be considered, namely, the breaking of vows. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will examine:

I. The nature of a vow.
II. The virtue of keeping vows.
III. The sin of breaking vows.

I

"What is a vow?" "A vow is a formal and deliberate promise made to God to do something that is pleasing to Him." To vow means to promise, and by a vow, therefore, we understand a promise. Every promise is not a vow, but only such as we make to God. How now, you say, if we promise Our Lady, or one of the saints, to do a certain thing in their honor is that not a vow? Yes, that may be a vow also, because the union between God and His elect is so intimate that what is done to the honor of the saints is also done to the glory of God.

The first characteristic of a vow is that it is a promise; the second, that it is a promise made to God or the saints; the third, that it is voluntary and formal. Indeed, a promise which is not voluntary is no promise at all, much less is it a vow.

Persons who have not the use of their free will, such as little children, habitual drunkards, or the mentally deficient, can not as long as they are in that state take vows. A vow is a formal promise made with full knowledge, and with the intention of binding ourselves, or at least with the consciousness that we are undertaking an obligation which it would be a sin not to fulfil. This is what constitutes the difference between a mere resolution and a vow. If a man undertakes, for instance, to cure himself of the habit of smoking, and resolves to give it up, he is under no sort of obligation to keep his resolution. By breaking it he merely shows of what poor stuff it was made, and how weak he is: "A reed shaken by the wind." He has committed no sin. But if by a vow to God he has pledged himself to give up smoking he is bound to perform what he has vowed, and he sins if he does not do so.

What things is it lawful to promise by a vow to God and His saints? Anything that is pleasing to God. Obviously, to promise anything displeasing to Him would be a mockery. Still it behooves us not to promise to almighty God foolish and valueless things. Children are delighted with a present or the promise of a little picture which would only be ridiculous if offered as a testimonial of esteem to a grown up person—say a distinguished magistrate or scholar. Similarly there can be very little meaning in offering to the eternal God things which, though not evil in themselves, can hardly be said to redound to His glory. Again the question arises: May we take a vow to do something which we are already bound to do

by a commandment? Certainly, but then we are bound to it by a double obligation, that of the commandment and that of our vow; and by going against what we are commanded and what we have vowed we commit a double sin. If a man is bound by a chain he may, if he likes, add another to it, but then he is doubly bound.

Vows may be divided into different classes. First, there are perpetual vows which are for ever, and, next, there are those taken only for a time. To make a solemn promise to say the Rosary every day is a perpetual vow; to promise to say it every day for a year is a temporary vow. Further, vows are divided into solemn vows, which the Church receives in the name of God, and simple vows, which require no such ceremony. Finally, a most important distinction is that between conditional and unconditional vows. The vow which Jacob took on his journey to Mesopotamia was a conditional vow: "If God shall be with me and shall keep me in the way by which I walk, and shall give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, and I shall return prosperously to my father's house, of all things that thou shalt give to me I will offer tithes to thee." If he had simply said, "I will give tithes to thee," it would have been an unconditional vow.

II

It is a very beautiful thing to make a vow and to keep it. There is something inspiring in the thought of man, who, poor creature that he is, has to be bound hand and foot by numberless commandments, voluntarily offering to almighty God

more than He asks and undertaking more, strictly speaking, than he is in duty bound to do. If God rewards us so generously when we obey in those things which He stringently commands under pain of severe punishment, how richly beyond all measure will He requite what has been promised and performed out of zeal and from pure love of Him.

Something further must be added to this. All virtues are not equal; those which, like faith, hope, and charity, relate immediately to God are the highest. Now to this category also belongs the virtue of the worship of God, the virtue which theologians call "Religion." Of course, by performing any good work some virtue or other is brought into play. By fasting it is self-denial; by giving alms, love of our neighbor; by suffering, patience. But whoever exercises these virtues because he has bound himself by a vow to do so is practising in addition the virtue of "Religion," or the worship of God. If we were allowed our choice of several pictures, all equally large and beautiful, but one of which had the additional advantage of being mounted in a handsome gilt frame, that is surely the gift we should choose in preference to the rest.

A vow, then, being such a beautiful and sacred thing, we can not wonder that the saints on earth took so many. We read that St. Paul traveled to Jerusalem in fulfilment of a vow. While still in early youth the Blessed Virgin made a vow of perpetual chastity; she could not otherwise have spoken to the angel as she did. Still less can we wonder that the Catholic Church approves of

vows, appointing special ceremonies in connection with the taking of them; or that she allows and sanctions a number of Religious Orders, whose whole organization and whose very existence depend on vows.

A vow is a beautiful thing! Shall we, then, all proceed at once to make as many vows as possible? I am not advocating that. If any of you are thinking of taking a vow consider well that its beauty and value consist in the keeping of it. Be on your guard against making vows which you will not keep, which you will not be able to keep, which are too difficult of fulfilment at your age in your station, under your conditions of life. The promise is quickly given, but it will take years and years to fulfil it. Vows are sometimes made in moments of great excitement or anxiety of mind, from fear, depression, or eager desire; but this state of agitation passes away. There are vows which remind one of the lovely white foam which shows on the sea when the waters are lashed into fury by a storm. The storm passes over, the foam disappears, but the deep water remains. Well, some vows are like the foam on the water. If you want to make a vow consult your confessor. Ask him what you may promise, in connection with what virtue, and for how long. This will be a safeguard. It is far better to make no promises than not to keep them.

III

Dearly beloved brethren, not to keep a vow which it is in our power to keep is a sin. But, after all, you may say, there is nothing so very

dreadful in not keeping a promise. Notwithstanding this, our word once given, be it to friend or foe, must be kept if it be in our power; for not to do so is to deceive and to take a mean advantage of our neighbor. Now, if it be unlawful to act in this way toward a man, how much more is it unlawful so to treat God? Do we suppose that He does not accept our promise? He does accept it if it is pleasing to Him, even if you whisper it in secret, in the quiet of the night, forming the words only in your heart. He knows if you are in a position to keep it, and how far your excuses for departing from it are to be regarded. It is a sin not to fulfill a vow, if it be in our power to do so.

What kind of sin is it? A mortal or a venial sin? Just as it depends upon you to make or not to make the vow at all, so you also are free to bind yourselves under pain of mortal or of venial sin. A man who wishes to tie himself fast may choose an iron chain, or a silken cord at his pleasure. "But," you say, "when I made my vow I did not bind myself under any penalty at all; I merely gave God my promise." What! Did you not mean to enter into an obligation? "No." Then you did not make a vow, but only a resolution. "O yes, I think I did have the feeling that I was entering into an engagement with God, but I never considered whether the neglect of it involved mortal or venial sin." Well, then, it is a vow, and you are bound; and the seriousness of your obligation depends on whether what you promised was something important or something comparatively trivial. If it

was of momentous importance you are bound to keep it under pain of mortal sin. If it was something trifling any neglect of your obligation to fulfil it can not be more than a venial sin.

Further, you must note, that not only is the non-fulfilment of a vow a sin; it is also sinful to put off the fulfilment of it without necessity. It is in this way that vows are forgotten, and that as time goes on their fulfilment becomes more and more difficult, until perhaps finally it becomes impossible.

Let us close our instruction by reviewing all that is commanded and forbidden by the second commandment. It commands us to reverence the name of God; it forbids us to pronounce it without due respect, without adequate reason, and still more to profane it by blaspheming, cursing, or false and sinful vows. Oh, Lord, from this day forward I will praise Thy holy name! I would rather be struck dumb than ever blaspheme against it. Let my tongue cleave to my mouth before I use it in sinful perjury. May curses be far from my lips and may Thy divine name never be spoken by me without my being moved to thoughts and feelings of the deepest reverence and adoration. Amen.

SERMON XX

On Keeping the Sunday Holy

"Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day" (*Ex.* xx. 8).

THE first of the ten commandments commands us to pay almighty God due honor and worship; the second to honor the name of God; and the third to keep holy the Lord's day.

Which is the Lord's day? The catechism teaches us that in the Old Law it was the Sabbath or seventh day of the week; but that in the New Law it is the Sunday or first day. The Sabbath was observed in the Old Law because God, after completing the work of creation in six days, rested on the seventh day. But, as the catechism goes on to explain: "The Church commands us to keep the Sunday holy instead of the Sabbath, because on Sunday Christ rose from the dead and on Sunday He sent the Holy Ghost upon the apostles." It is not without reason, therefore, that under the New Law the Sunday was substituted for the Sabbath; this change was made in the earliest Christian times and we see pretty clearly from Holy Scripture that even in the days of the apostles it had already taken place.

What, then, does the third commandment enjoin? To keep the Sunday holy. How do we keep the Sunday holy? In two ways:

I. By abstaining from servile work—the day of rest.

II. By prayer and other good works—the day of sanctification.

We will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, consider these two points briefly and devoutly.

I

We will begin by considering Sunday as a day of rest. The rest consists in the abstention from servile work, by which we mean all such manual labor as is usually performed by servants, mechanics, and day-workers of all kinds in workshops, pits, mines, or factories. It is evident that there may be occasions when the glory of God, or charity toward our neighbor, or our own necessities, will oblige us to depart from this general rule. No one would consider it wrong to ring Church bells on Sunday to the glory of God; nor would any one in case of fire or flood, railway accident or shipwreck grudge on a Sunday the labor involved in succoring his neighbor, and working hard out of charity to save his life and possessions. Neither is the housewife to be blamed who on Sunday washes and mends the clothes her husband or her son have taken off late on Saturday night, and which they must put on again early on Monday morning. It is a work of necessity. One can not instance every case. The general rule that servile work is forbidden on Sunday must hold good, but there are well-founded exceptions.

The Sunday day of rest is necessary on human and economic grounds. The human body is not so made as to be able to stand the strain of con-

tinuous work day by day without intermission, except at the risk of serious injury to health involving loss of working-power and sometimes even premature decay. This is an absolute fact. Even a mere lifeless machine can not be kept uninterruptedly in motion. The axle of the wheels of an express train, for example, would become so hot and burning that an outbreak of fire might be the result. The body of a man who works is not a lifeless machine, and it grows weary and sleepy from constant strain and effort. It is composed of parts more numerous and more delicate than those of the most intricate machine, and each of these parts must act upon the other, and requires to be nourished, refreshed, and stimulated by means of rest, sleep, and recreation. Would you condemn such a body to unremitting, unceasing toil? The weekly day of rest is all the more imperative that the work of many has to be done in ill-ventilated rooms, or under the surface of the earth, or in a very hot or a very damp atmosphere; or with unwholesome materials, or at the cost of great bodily exertion. In the year 1873 a Sabbatarian Society in Switzerland gave a prize for the best essay on "The effect of Sunday on health." A great many papers were contributed by the foes as well as by the friends of religion, but one and all agreed that the Sunday rest was necessary.

It would be well, indeed, if the ancient commandment of God and of the Church were respected and universally followed: "Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; thou

shalt do no work on it; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates" (*Ex.* xx. 9, 10); to-day we might say, "thou and thy children, and thy servants and thy friends, and thy work-shops and factories and machinery." Do we think that God, who created man, does not know what amount of rest is necessary for him; and, if He did not, would man himself be likely to be better informed on the subject?

II

There is not a doubt that a day of rest is a necessity; this is the teaching of nature, and is also the experience of thousands of years; and above all it is the ordinance of God. Quite so, replies the unbeliever, we thoroughly agree with what you say, but the day of rest need not necessarily be the Jewish Sabbath, nor yet the Sunday of Christians; nor is it essential that it should recur exactly every seven days. Every six or every eight days would do just as well. Neither need we all have our day of rest simultaneously.

It would be quite open to us to argue in this way if Sunday were a day of rest only, and nothing more. But is this the case? Is the sole end and aim of Sunday to secure for man a day of freedom from work, when he may sleep, walk about, visit public-houses, read newspapers, and make excursions? Far from it. This gives us but one side of the picture, which would avail nothing without the other more important side. We have to remember that Sunday is a day to

be sanctified and kept holy. God did not only say on the seventh day "thou shalt rest"; He added, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." He lays upon us the duty of sanctifying the Sunday. On all the working days we are to do our own works; but Sunday we must give to God's work. This is the second, and much more important, side of the question.

Why is it the more important side? Because the main object of the day of rest is that man, after laboring for six days, may be for one day free from the trammels of every-day life, in order to devote himself to the care of his soul and to the affairs of eternity; to enable him to sanctify the work of the week by offering it to God and obtaining His blessing on it. The service of God ranks immeasurably higher than the service of man; the care of the soul is of far greater importance than the care of the body. It is much more necessary for us to sanctify the Sunday than that we should use it for rest, be we ever so tired. God does not require merely that individual men should worship and serve him; He demands that the family as a whole, the congregation, the Church as a whole, indeed humanity and creation as a whole, should worship Him and consecrate to Him their entire existence. For it is not a mere day of rest that is required, but a fixed and regularly recurring day of rest on which the family and the congregation assemble in the presence of God to adore Him, to thank Him for all His benefits, and to beg His blessing on their every-day work. This is the true meaning of Sunday, abstention from work being merely part of the

plan of sanctification. As long as we do not recognize this truth the Sunday rest is of little or no avail. As long as no higher view is taken of Sunday than that after six days of work and money-making the seventh is the time for enjoyment, there will be trouble, discontent, and unrest in human society; and the Sunday which was meant to be holy will become secularized, just in the way that convents and church goods have been secularized in some parts of the world by the laws of the State. O almighty God! Thou wilt not allow Thyself and Thy laws to be mocked. To what end do factories flourish, keeping machinery in motion, and men at work feverishly day and night; what does it avail that days of rest should be observed, if Thy holy and ancient commandment—"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day"—is set aside? Such a Sunday will not satisfy and console the heart of the worker. He will go from work to pleasure, from pleasure back again to work, and Monday morning will find him more tired than Saturday night.

How greatly, on the other hand, the sanctification of Sunday contributes to the happiness of human society! Look at the hard-worked laboring man as he goes on Sunday to the Church, the house of God. His home is small and poor and devoid of ornament; but in the Church he can say: "This is my house, this is the house of my Father. I have as great a right to be here as the richest in the land, and a day will come when I will enter the dwelling of God, the home of eternal rest, not made by human hands." He can feel that in the house of God we are all brothers,

members of the great family of God. The word of God resounds in his ear reminding him that his real home is not on earth, but far away beyond the stars; that earthly sorrow and labor are as fleeting as earthly happiness and comfort. He assists at the holy sacrifice of the Mass and remembers how Christ became man and made Himself our brother and companion; that labor, sacrifice, and suffering were His, and that He offered Himself for us. Such a man can say, "In truth, Lord, my Saviour, it is no degradation, it is an honor to resemble Thee in Thy work and suffering, Thy sacrifice and Thy poverty. 'If any one will be My disciple let him take up his cross and follow Me.' I will take up mine; give me strength to carry it. I offer Thee the work of the coming week; bless every step I take, every movement of my hand, every drop of my sweat." Further, what is there to prevent the Christian working man from kneeling Sunday by Sunday after a humble contrite confession at the Lord's table to receive the bread of angels? All the money in the world could procure him nothing better, for the world contains nothing better. Then with a heart lightened, consoled, and strengthened he returns to his home, to enjoy the frolic of his children, the peace of his family; he prays with them as they sit down to table, he makes merry with them; no one will grudge him lawful pleasures and amusements on the Lord's Day. "Rejoice in the Lord always," says St. Paul, "and again I say, Rejoice!" When he takes up his burden once more for the following week the Sunday will have sanctified what has gone before, and given

strength for what is to come. It is a ray of light, an oasis in the misery of life, for what is life if we deprive it of its outlook upon eternity? Unbelievers themselves proclaim it not worth living. What have all the promises of democracy and socialism to offer in exchange for the consolations of religion? They are the veriest tinsel as opposed to pure gold. Those who do not pray on Sunday neglect prayer on week-days, too, and yet the man who tries, apart from God and religion and prayer, to better his condition will not and never can be successful.

Dearly beloved brethren, let us not so debase ourselves as to become the slaves of men, of work, of machinery. We must have our day of rest. But Sunday is not to be for us a day of mere earthly enjoyment—a day of unrestraint, impurity, extravagance, and sin; we will spend it in holiness, in the worship of God, and in prayer, making it a day of rest and of holy joy. Citizens of earth though we be, we are called also to be citizens of heaven, the eternal home which God has in store for each one of us. Amen.

SERMON XXI

On the Duty of Honoring Our Parents

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land" (*Ex.* xx. 12).

Of the ten commandments the three first deal with our obligations toward God. We have considered these in detail. The next seven are concerned with our duties to our fellow-men.

The first place amongst these is given to the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land." The catechism asks: "What are we commanded by the fourth commandment?" "We are commanded by the fourth commandment to honor, love, and obey our parents in all that is not sin." Children, therefore, owe a three-fold duty to their parents: honor, love, and obedience. We will choose the first of these for our instruction to-day and will consider, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. Why we are bound to honor our parents.
II. In what way we must honor them.
III. How we sin against the honor due to them.

I

The reasons why children should honor their parents and those whom they have placed in authority are so numerous that one hardly knows with which to begin, or where to leave off. Is not age worthy of veneration? Holy Scripture says:

"Rise up before the hoary head and honor the person of the aged man." This applies to every hoary head and to every aged man. Parents are older than their children, just as superiors are usually older than those under their charge; therefore, honor is due to them, first of all on account of their greater age, and their wider and riper experience of life. Moreover, it is a universally accepted maxim that we are bound to respect those from whom we have received benefits. Who could count or realize the many great benefits for which children have to thank their parents? Under God they owe them everything. How much anxiety and toil have they not cost their father, how many sleepless nights, how much self-denial has their mother not suffered on their behalf, how many tears has she not shed for them during the years of their childhood before they were capable of giving even a word of thanks in return! Tobias, when old and ill, exhorted his son to respect his mother, reminding him of all she had done for him: "Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart . . . thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of thy life, for thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee" (*Tob.* iv. 2-4). The same can be said of all those who are in a position of authority and responsibility toward others. Those under their charge have in most cases not an idea of the anxiety and care, the work and the prayers of which they are the object. If they had they would not deny to those who are set over them the honor which is their due. But let us come to the main point. Parents

are to their children, superiors are to their subordinates, the representatives of God. Yes, the representatives of God; Adam and Eve had no parents and no superiors, and God created them not as children, but as full-grown man and woman, no longer needing the care of father or mother. He instructed them with His own lips; He Himself laid down rules for them, warned and threatened them, and after the fall He provided them with clothing. All this He does for us also, not in person, but through our parents whom He has appointed in His place, filling them with love for us, and providing them with the necessary means and capabilities to act toward us as He Himself acted toward our first parents in Paradise. "There is no power but from God." Therefore, the power exercised by parents over children, by superiors over subordinates, is from God. It comes from God, who intends it to be used, and who will demand an account of it. Beyond doubt, reasons abound for honoring those who are older than we are, who have done us more good than we can ever repay, and, most important of all, who take the place of God to us. Any one of these grounds would suffice to establish firmly the principle of reverence.

II

How can you show honor to your parents? In numberless ways, great and small: By rising when your parents enter the room, by yielding them the word in conversation, by affectionate greetings, by speaking of them always with due respect and reverence. If you have to make im-

portant decisions, to choose a state in life, for instance, ask their opinion and counsel. We have two great examples, one in the Old Testament and one in the New, of how parents and superiors should be treated. Joseph, the son of Jacob, had become great and powerful in the land of Egypt; he was governor of the whole country, second only to the king, and learned in all the arts of the Egyptians. This position he owed principally to his own wisdom and virtue. Compared to him what was his old father Jacob? A broken-down old man, almost blind, threatened in his own country with the danger of starvation. How did Joseph behave when his poor old father came to Egypt to visit him? He went out to meet him, fell upon his neck and kissed him, crying for joy. More than this. He was not ashamed to introduce him to the king; he provided for him, visited him when he was sick, begged and received his blessing when he was dying. After the death of Jacob Joseph fulfilled his father's dying wish and, having had the body embalmed, conveyed it, accompanied by a large escort, into the land of Canaan, where, when the prescribed seven days of mourning were over, a solemn burial took place. He spared neither time, trouble, nor expense to pay to his father's remains the last earthly honors.

In the New Testament we have the glorious example of Jesus Christ Himself. He was far more powerful than His holy mother, for He was almighty; wiser than His foster-father, St. Joseph, for He was omniscient; he was older and holier than either of them, for He was eternal and all holy. They owed Him everything, and yet our

Saviour performed all the duties of a good child to them. He honored Mary and Joseph, and sought to obey their slightest wish. Do you want proof of this? What did our Lady say to Him at the marriage feast of Cana when the wine failed? "They have no wine." She gave no command, she did not even make a request; it was not a pressing case of great need or importance, it was merely a matter of a little inconvenience —and yet, what did our Saviour do? In order to satisfy the wish of His mother He worked a great miracle, the first He had wrought up to that time. Although His hour was not yet come He desired to honor His mother. Where is there a child who has not got it in his power to imitate the behavior of Joseph in Egypt, and that of the divine Saviour at Nazareth?

III

And yet how greatly children fail in reverence to parents and superiors. They offend often and grievously against their duty in this regard, although it is clearly so sacred an obligation and is sanctioned by such example and precedent that it must obviously always be sin, and even under certain circumstances grave sin, not to fulfil it. Those who deny to parents and superiors the respect which is their due can not possibly be good children; unhappily, none the less, we see such a state of things but too often. "What is forbidden by the fourth commandment?" The answer of the catechism is: "The fourth commandment forbids all disobedience, contempt, and stubbornness toward our parents or lawful superiors."

Let us consider these points for a few moments.

Children may sin against the reverence due to parents in thought, by making little of them and despising them. It may be, and in reality often is, the case that parents and superiors have faults, that they are deficient physically and mentally, and suffer from many weaknesses and defects; and a child is probably quite alive to this, not only realizing it, but feeling it and suffering from it keenly. But is it lawful for him on this account to despise and look down upon his parents? By no means. The Bible says: "Glory not in the dishonor of thy father; for his shame is no glory to thee. If his understanding fail, have patience with him and despise him not when thou art in thy strength" (*Ecclus.* iii. 12-15). Solomon, the wise, tells us: "Despise not thy mother when she is old" (*Prov.* xxiii. 22). A dealer in antiquities had an old watch in his shop; the case was damaged and the spring was broken. Every one could see this for themselves, but the old shopkeeper never dreamed of calling any one's attention to it. He pointed out the richness of the materials, the delicacy of the workmanship, the valuable stones with which it was set, and the early date engraved on it.

Again, children offend against the respect due to parents by their words, when they speak unkindly of them. Unless there is a reason for doing so we are not allowed to discuss the faults of any one, not even those of our worst enemy. How, then, can we excuse a child who enjoys detecting the faults of his parents, and talking and gossiping about them, enlarging upon them

and making fun of them? Holy Scripture says: "He that shall curse father and mother, dying let him die." Children sin against the respect due to parents in deed and in work, when they are ashamed of their parents and try to ignore them. This sometimes happens when children rise in position and fortune above their original station. "Remember," says Holy Scripture, "thy father and thy mother when thou sittest in the midst of great men, lest God forget thee in their sight" (*Ecclus.* xxiii. 18, 19). Finally, children offend against the reverence due to parents when they are stubborn and rude to them, and show disrespect where there ought to be nothing but respect. "The eye that mocketh at his father," says Holy Scripture, "let the ravens of the brook pick it out." What punishment can be found for the child who insolently threatens his father or mother, or who even goes so far as to raise his hand, or to draw a knife against them to injure them. We know from the newspapers that such things happen, and in these days, when crimes of this kind are so frequent, it is necessary to insist as strongly as possible upon the duty of respect which children owe to their parents and superiors.

Dearly beloved, let us imagine God speaking to each one of us and saying: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Yes, Lord, Thou hast spoken and Thy words come home to me. Now, let us cast a glance on our past life. Have I shown my parents the reverence due to them? Always? At all times? Under all circumstances? If you are forced to answer "No" to these questions,

then endeavor earnestly and perseveringly to repair and make good your past deficiencies by special carefulness on this point. But it is too late, you may say, my parents have long since left this world. What can I do? Honor them by praying for them diligently, by speaking of them always with respect, fulfilling their last wishes, and carrying out all their instructions. Honor them by showing respect to all who take their place, to all who are by the Providence of God your lawful superiors. Honor them and "thou shalt live long upon the land," and shalt gain, moreover, the reward of eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXII

On the Sins Against Love and Obedience

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just" (*Eph.* vi. 1).

CHILDREN owe three duties to their parents: honor, love, and obedience. As regards the first of these we considered last Sunday the reasons why children should honor their parents and lawful superiors, as well as the way in which they can show them this honor, and how they may sin by neglecting to do so.

The same reasons that exist for honoring our parents, apply with equal force to our showing them love and obedience, nor is it difficult to see the way in which these duties ought to be fulfilled; it remains, therefore, for us to consider how we may commit sin by failing in them.

I

Children sin against the love they owe their parents (1) when they are ungrateful toward them and neglect to pray for them; (2) when they wish them ill; (3) when they sadden or anger them; (4) when they refuse to support them if they are in need, and do not bear patiently with their faults and failings. It is evident that love may be outraged in any of these ways.

If we love others we shall wish all that is best for them. This is the very essence and root of love, from which spring the beautiful leaves and blossoms of prayer, prayer that God may bestow

on those we love every grace, and may preserve them in the enjoyment of every good. From this same root come forth also the fruits of love, namely, a desire to keep those we love from harm; to help them in their difficulties and troubles, making ourselves the source of as much joy and comfort to them as we can. If this is what love does, it is very evident that children but too often disobey its dictates.

1. They do so when they are ungrateful and neglect to pray for their parents. An ungrateful heart is never loving; a thankless child is always an unloving one. If love is not awakened by the bestowal of favors and benefits what can have power to awaken it? If the thought of the love his parents bear him and the remembrance of all their goodness to him does not rouse love for them in the heart of a child, it is hard to say what could do so. Love begets love. One fire kindles another. Those children must be bad at heart who feel no spark of affection and gratitude toward those who have given them birth. The more a child realizes that it is impossible for him ever to repay his parents for all they have done for him, the more fervently will he pray to God, asking Him who is rich above all measure to make them a generous return. How beautiful is the prayer of children for their parents! What an efficacy belongs to it, offered as it is for those who take God's place to him who appointed them to be His representatives. Such a prayer is an act, a sign, a proof of the love children bear their parents. How sad it is when

for weeks and months or even years children forget to pray and make intercession in this way!

2. But how much more terrible is the behavior of those who actually desire evil to their own parents, wishing them misfortune, sickness, and death. If to love is to wish well, then to wish evil is the very opposite, the direct antithesis of love, and children who can form bad wishes for their father and mother are as far from loving them as darkness is removed from light.

3. The love due to parents is still further violated and wounded by children who repay evil to their father and mother in return for the good they have received from them, who injure them, who provoke them, and are to them a constant source of sorrow and heartache. Unhappily, many children by their words, their behavior, their conduct, their extravagance, cause their parents more sorrow than all the other troubles in the world put together. The older such children grow and the more capable they get of understanding their duty and being a comfort to their parents, becoming the staff of their old age, the light of their eyes, and the joy of their life, the more often they occasion them anxiety and heartache. There is a German saying: "The little child treads on the dress of the mother, but the big child tramples on her heart." There are bad sons and frivolous, inconsiderate daughters of whom one may say that they are embittering the days of their parents, hastening their death, and in fact driving the last nail into their coffin.

Young Tobias was very far from being a source of sorrow to his parents. He was making a jour-

ney at his father's wish; he was accompanied by a reliable guide; no particular day had been mentioned for his return. On his journey he found the companion of his life, and his father-in-law pressed him to remain with them a few days longer. But he refused, giving as his reason that his parents would be anxious about him: "My father numbereth the days, and if I stay one day more his soul will be afflicted."

Just as it is incompatible with love, willingly to give sorrow to our parents, it is not less so to neglect to support them when they are in need, or to refuse to bear patiently with their faults and weaknesses. It is a beautiful dispensation of Divine Providence that children are small and helpless, delicate and entirely dependent on others, just at the time when their parents are in the prime of life; and that when the parents become old, infirm, helpless, and incapable of work, their children as a rule have reached the full bloom of their strength and vigor. Is this not clearly a sign, a finger-post showing that as parents have denied themselves to bring up their children, so they in their turn must stand by their parents in their need? What can we say when we realize that there are sons who are prodigal of their money for drink, tobacco, amusement, and God knows what besides, but who never have a penny to spare for their aged and needy parents; that there are daughters who spend all their earnings in buying dresses and hats and finery, but who leave their old father and mother in want. Is this fulfilling their filial duty? Surely it is the very opposite, and a grave sin.

It is a further breach of filial love and duty for children to refuse to bear patiently with the faults and defects of their parents. Old age necessarily brings many infirmities with it, bodily weakness caused by heaviness and unwieldiness of frame, by uncertain sight if not total blindness; by deafness, or at least hardness of hearing, a condition of constant invalidism, if not real illness. Besides this, mental and moral infirmities make themselves felt; loss of memory, forgetfulness, often a propensity to complain and find fault, to be discontented and querulous in temper. Sometimes old people sink into a state of semi-childishness. It is no easy task to bear patiently day by day during long years with infirmities of this kind, but it is the mission of filial love to do so. Children must remember that it is just in this way that they can show their love; their parents were patient with them, bearing with their childish lisping before they could speak plainly or walk a step without holding onto their mother's hand, and when they cried and were fretful without knowing why. The infirmities of parents should be borne with, without grumbling or complaint or reproach, but with genuine and steadfast love.

II

We will now consider in what way children sin against the obedience due to parents. They sin against this obedience (1) when they disobey their parents or obey them unwillingly; (2) when they refuse to accept their advice and warnings; (3) when they rebel against the punishments their parents may think fit to inflict.

It is clear that a child sins by not doing what his parents command; in other words, by being disobedient. But those sin also who obey only out of necessity and badly, reluctantly, and grudgingly; who would, in fact, disobey if they dared.

Obedience is essential. In the material world one sees that all things follow certain God-given laws. The moon revolves round the earth, the planets move round the sun, and all the heavenly bodies follow the path appointed for them with fidelity and exactness. We reasonable beings are called upon to keep of our own free will the laws which God has made for us. What would become of human society if there were no civil authority, no laws to be followed, or if in family life parents were not entitled to command and children obliged to obey. Neither State, nor city, nor family, nor community of any kind could hold together. Robbery, theft, violence, and murder would be the order of the day. We should all be warring against each other and society would resolve itself into a regular pandemonium.

Now if obedience is ever necessary, and at the same time easy, it is in the relations of children and parents. "I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me," said the younger Tobias. But why should we look for examples of obedience in the Old Testament when we have that of our divine Saviour Himself before our eyes. His example alone should suffice to make every child obedient, and thoroughly put to shame the disobedient ones, while, at the same time, it demolishes all arguments against the duty of obedience. "He was subject to them," says Holy

Scripture. He, the Son of God, infinitely more powerful, more wise, more holy than His Father and Mother, for He was almighty, all-wise, all-holy, was subject to Mary, His blessed Mother, a humble virgin, and Joseph, His foster-father, a poor carpenter. In the modest home at Nazareth He was bound by all the restrictions of a poor and necessitous household; in St. Joseph's workshop He submitted to follow the trade of a common artisan. And this He did up to His thirtieth year, with the utmost willingness and obedience. O shame on all children who call themselves Christians, and who yet disregard this example, refusing to take it to heart and follow it!

As children grow up wise parents avoid giving direct commands, but try to make their wishes known by caution and advice, sometimes even by requests. How should children behave under these circumstances? They should be glad to listen to the advice of their parents, following it whenever they can. They commit a sin if they fail to do so. "Poverty and shame to him that refuseth instruction, but he that yieldeth to reproof shall be glorified."

Finally, children sin against due obedience when they resent being punished by their parents. Parents have just as much right to punish as they have to command; in fact, it is not only a right, but a duty for them to punish their disobedient and rebellious children. Heli, the high-priest, knew of the transgressions of his two sons; he neither sanctioned nor palliated their evil doings; on the contrary, he warned and blamed them, he remonstrated with them, but he did not punish them. And what was the result? "Behold," said

the Lord to Samuel, "I do a thing in Israel, and whosoever shall hear it both his ears shall tingle. For I have foretold unto Heli that I will judge his house forever, for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly and did not chastise them." These words came to pass; both sons were killed in the same battle, and when, on the same day, the news of their death was brought to their father, he fell off his stool and broke his neck. It was written in the law: "If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father and mother, and being corrected slighteth obedience . . . the people of the city shall stone him . . . that all Israel hearing it may be afraid." How many sons would be stoned were this law still in force!

Children owe their parents honor, love, and obedience; this is a truth, and will remain true to the end of the world. No power on earth can upset this law; parents themselves can not abolish it. Oh, children, strive to fulfil it. Show honor, love, and obedience to your parents, because they are your parents, and being God's representatives to you you owe them everything. If this does not afford you a sufficiently strong motive call to mind that those who neglect this duty incur the contempt of men, and the curse of God.

Remember that there is no better or more simple way of deserving happiness on earth and the blessing of God, long life and eternal happiness, than by keeping the fourth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother which is the first commandment with a promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth" (*Eph.* vi. 2, 3). Amen.

SERMON XXIII

On the Duties of Parents Toward their Children

"Withhold not correction from a child" (*Prov.* xxiii. 13).

Our last meditation was on the duties of honor, love, and obedience which children owe their parents. The fourth commandment comprises not only the duties of children and subordinates, but also those of parents to their children, and of all in authority toward those under their charge.

To-day we will try to bring clearly before our eyes the duties which parents have to fulfil to their children. The catechism asks: "Have parents and superiors any duties toward those who are under their charge?" "It is the duty of parents and superiors to take good care of all under their charge, and give them proper direction and example." To do this five things are necessary: (1) that parents pray fervently for their children; (2) that they have them thoroughly instructed in the Catholic religion; (3) that they train them to everything good; (4) that they protect them against temptation; (5) that they correct their faults.

You will exclaim: "What a number of duties! We can barely remember them, much less fulfil them all." It is not so difficult a matter as all that. In order to impress on your minds the duties in question I will divide them into three points, easily grasped and retained by the most

unretentive memory. If parents want to bring up their children for God and for eternal life they must, in educating them, make a right use of:

I. Tongue.
II. Eyes.
III. Hands.

We will consider these headings attentively, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

Parents in educating their children must make a right use of their tongue. How can they do this? In speaking to God, in speaking to their children, and in not speaking at all. They make a right use of their tongue by speaking to God; in other words, by praying for their children. God has given you these children, confiding them to your care. They are His as much as yours. They have been entrusted to you in order that, in accordance with the divine purpose, you may educate them for eternal life. The eye of God watches these children more closely than any human eye can do; the hand of God is powerful enough to avert danger from their path, to protect them, to lead and guide them from infancy to old age, even did no mother's eye ever rest on them, no father's hand support and help them. God loves your children more than you love them yourself. What greater service can you do them, then, than to pray constantly and earnestly for them. Your children are praying for you; it would be a disgrace to parents if their children outdid them in the fervor and persistence of their prayers. You

love your children; they are more to you than friends or relatives, neighbors or superiors; they are dearer to you than all else, dearer even than your own selves. Now, if this is so, pray earnestly for them every day. Then God our Lord will be both father and mother to them. He will watch over them when you can not; when you are separated from them God will be near them: He will not forsake them should they be left orphans. Pray; let your whole work of education be guided by prayer; prayer will counteract and rectify the mistakes which you in your ignorance or laziness or want of consideration must inevitably make in your dealings with your children.

But you must use the tongue not only in speaking to God, you must speak to the children themselves also. You must give them instruction. Children ought to receive the first lessons in their religion from their parents. As soon as they can pronounce the words "father" and "mother," teach them also the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. Show them how to bow their heads, to bend their knee, to make the sign of the cross. What a blessed thing it is to see innocent children raising their hearts and eyes and hands to God. They have taken their first step on the road that leads to heaven. As time goes on children ought to be thoroughly instructed in the Catholic religion, but it is impossible for parents to do all this instruction themselves. Household cares and occupations do not leave you time enough. But for this very reason be careful to send your children regularly to school, to the instructions for confession and communion, to catechism class and

to sermons. In these days we can not be too well grounded in the knowledge of our faith. The priest is quite willing to undertake what is really one of your responsibilities. Therefore send the children regularly; see that they learn their catechism and go over it with them. The tongue and the mouth have also their part to play in training children to all that is good: to modesty in word and look, in dress and bearing; to purity and chastity; to habits of industry and self-denial; to moderation in eating and drinking; to willing, complete, and faithful obedience; to morning and evening prayer; to grace before meals; to going to church; to receiving the sacraments. Train your children to good by every means in your power; by commands, by advice, entreaties, tears, and, if needs be, by threats and punishments; but always, above everything, by your own personal example.

Finally, the tongue must co-operate in the work of educating your children by its silence. You must bridle and control it in such a way that no word of anger or blasphemy, no coarse or profane word or any kind of indecency in speech shall ever pass your lips in presence of your children. These are things which they should never learn from any one, but least of all from their own parents. It is a fact that the right bringing up of children depends to a great extent on whether the parents know how to make a good use of their tongues.

II

The eyes equally come into play in the work of education. The eyes of the parents must super-

vise their children. Why? Well, simply because without such supervision a good education is impossible. How can parents warn children of danger unless they themselves see and realize it? Will they be able to avert false steps and mistakes without knowing the tendencies of their children and the opportunities of evil that are open to them? How carefully the farmer watches his crop, the vinegrower his vine, the shepherd the flock entrusted to him! Good parents, above all, must keep their eyes open to the doings, the comings and goings of their children.

Very well, you say, but to what in particular is my supervision to be directed? To everything, absolutely everything. See what the children do when they are alone and when they are with others; know what friends they make; who they play with; the songs they sing; the expressions they use; the books they read; who they correspond with; who they go out with, and where they go; how long they stay, and when they come back; if they pray, and how they pray; their behavior in church, and how often they receive the sacraments.

When children grow older there is every reason why you should consider carefully into whose service you send them or what line of work they decide to undertake, the master they will be under, the workshop they will work in. All these matters have a bearing upon their upbringing—a hundred eyes would be none too many to supervise thoroughly the education of one single child. You must work your two eyes very hard indeed, therefore, if you want to watch successfully over not one, but perhaps many children.

Do you realize fully the importance of this supervision? The fact alone that the sharp eye of a good father and mother is upon them makes children careful. The very thought that they are being watched keeps them from many a fault. When children begin to go astray they begin to prefer being out of doors, they avoid home because they have something to hide, they want to be with strangers, removed from the eye of father and mother.

Now it is easy to see what is to be expected from an upbringing in which parents do not make use of their eyes. "They have eyes and see not; they have ears and hear not." What are we to think of those parents who not only refuse to open their eyes, but keep them closed on purpose to avoid seeing the faults of their children, and who will not suffer other people to point them out? A teacher, a neighbor, a priest may come to them and say: "Your son is doing so and so —your daughter is behaving in such a way." What answer does he generally receive? What thanks does he get? "What are my children to you? That is my business." Can the children of such parents be guarded from temptation? It does not seem very likely.

III

Finally, in educating their children, parents must, if needs be, use their hands; in other words, they must punish their children.

No reasonable person will deny that parents have the right to punish their children should they require it. Why? Because those who are

bound to attain a given end must also be authorized to use the means without which it is impossible to reach it. No country could be governed if there were no power to inflict punishment. No carter would undertake to drive his team safely unless he were free to use the whip. The doctors of old days used to say steel will heal where medicine does not, meaning by this the use of the knife. "Fire will heal where steel can not"; in other words, sometimes the wound must be burned away. One can in the same way, in speaking of the work of education, say: The tongue must supplement the eye, the hand must supplement the tongue. "Withhold not correction from a child; for if thou strike him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell." These words of Holy Scripture are very remarkable: "*Withhold* not correction from a child." "*Withhold not*" implies, do not take from the child what he ought to have, what you owe him. Parents must not withhold bread or clothing from their child; neither must they withhold correction. "If you strike him with the rod" what follows? Two things: First, it will do the child no harm, "he shall not die"; and as to his soul, "Thou shalt deliver his soul from hell." Can you confer a greater benefit on your child, or give a greater proof of your love for him than to deliver his soul from hell? All children run the risk of losing their souls eternally. If parents want to save them they must punish them.

How are they to punish them? In good time. As soon as the child begins to sin. In modera-

tion, in proportion to the fault. Not too leniently, for a punishment that is not felt is no punishment, but not too severely. Combine firmness with gentleness; the ark of the covenant of the Old Testament contained both the rod of Aaron and sweet manna. Let the punishment be administered quietly, without anger or excitement; but let it be thorough. When you consider punishment necessary do not be turned from your purpose either by the gossip of friends, the entreaties of the brothers and sisters, or the cries of the guilty child himself. Children's tears are soon dried. But those that parents weep over bad children are bitter in the extreme and flow without measure.

But, before everything else, dear fathers and mothers who are listening to me, if you desire to bring your children up well, lay hands first on yourselves, and set yourselves to lead a God-fearing life. Children have the tendency to imitation which is so strong an element in human nature. The example of their parents, to whom they look up, is continually before their eyes. If there is nothing in your conduct contrary to the law of God, if you live in harmony together, laboriously and self-sacrificingly; if you are restrained in your speech, patient under suffering, zealous in prayer and in the service of God, and full of trust in Him, be assured that your children will be like you, will follow the same path, and will reach, either a little before or a little after you, the goal of eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXIV

On the Duties of Masters, Mistresses and Servants Toward each Other

"Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal" (*Col.* iv. 1).

We have considered the duties of children toward their parents, and how they can be fulfilled or violated. The obligations of inferiors to their superiors are exactly the same as those of children to their parents, and for the simple reason that superiors take the place of God to those under them, often even actually representing the parents either entirely or in part.

Having reviewed the duties of parents to their children, we must now glance at the relations of superiors with those under their care, and I will single out that of servants and masters in particular, examining it under the two following heads:

I. The duties of servants to their masters.
II. The duties of masters toward their servants.

I

What duty do servants owe their masters? Briefly they owe them respect, love, obedience. This comprises everything. The nearer the relationship of servant and master resembles that of parent and child the better, the more beautiful, the more holy and perfect it is. I need not enter into a more detailed explanation.

I should wish only to remind servants that three

things belonging to their masters are sacred and must be respected by them, namely: their good name, their property, and their children.

(a) Their good name. Servants live in the house of their employers; they see and hear and observe a great deal. The terms on which their master and mistress live with each other and with their children; how the sons and daughters get on together; the state of the family affairs, details appertaining to household matters, the attitude toward relatives. Now sometimes it would seem as though servants had nothing more pressing to do than to retail such matters all over the town, in shops, at market, or while visiting their friends. They recount, exaggerating and enlarging upon them, the doings of their employers, preferring to dwell upon the bad rather than the good; making what perhaps happened once appear as though it were a matter of daily occurrence, and converting molehills into mountains, till at last by twisting and turning things they succeed in inventing what never took place at all. Are these servants showing respect and love to their master and mistress? No; they are playing the part of spies and enemies within their very walls.

In saying this we are far from meaning that it is not permissible for servants to consult their parents or guardians or those who advise them in questions of importance; such, for instance, as to whether they should give notice to leave their place or not, or as regards the matter of wages, or in case they should wish to give up service altogether.

(b) Servants should look upon the property of

their masters as sacred. This is a principle they often violate, chiefly by neglecting, out of laziness, inattention, or dilatoriness, the work they are paid to do. Just as it is downright dishonest of employers not to pay servants the wages they have earned, so it is equally dishonest of servants not to do the work for which they have received payment. The one ought to imply the other. Servants sin by wasting the property of their masters, by accepting payment for work which they have not performed.

But it is a still greater sin for them to betray the confidence of their employers by appropriating either for themselves or for others food or drink, goods of any kind, clothing or money belonging to their master and mistress. We have bolts and bars to guard our windows and doors against thieves and robbers, but how can we defend ourselves against the inmates of the household? Servants also fail in their duty when, although not actually taking anything themselves, they allow other servants or the children of the family to appropriate the property of their master without informing him of what is being done. A nice state of affairs, indeed, to have thieves and robbers in one's house aided and abetted by those in whom we trust. Perhaps you may say: "But it is only in very trifling matters." Nevertheless remember "many a mickle makes a muckle," or perhaps you will urge the smallness of your wages as an excuse. It is quite possible that your wage is small, smaller than it should be. If this is so, complain of it in the right quarter and apply for an increase, or, failing this, give notice to

leave in the proper way. But it is absolutely out of order for you to determine on your own account what the proper rate of your wages should be, and then, without the knowledge of your master, to seek to recover them at his expense. The proposition that "it is allowable for servants secretly to steal from their masters, in order to remunerate themselves for services performed as they consider in excess of their appointed wage" is the thirty-seventh of the sixty-five propositions expressly rejected and condemned by Pope Innocent XII.

(c) But, above everything, servants should look upon the children of their employer as sacred. It is a mark of confidence to entrust to a servant the care of your home, to give him the key of the cellar, the run of the house and kitchen. But it is a much greater mark of trust to confide children, the very apple of their parents' eye, to the charge and management of servants, allowing them to be their companions in their daily comings and goings.

Many parents are obliged to leave their children a good deal to servants. Trust surely merits a loyal return. How wicked a thing it is for a servant to be the means of leading a child into evil, by the style of conversation he indulges in or the songs he is not ashamed to sing in the presence of his charge, or by becoming his teacher in sin and blasphemy, to set him upon the high road to destruction, making opportunities for wrongdoing, and helping to conceal and deny what has been done, so as to deceive and betray the parents. It would be better to harbor snakes and dragons

than to have such servants in our house. Our Saviour says: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."

II

If servants have duties toward their masters, masters also have obligations toward their servants. What are these obligations?

(a) The payment of just wages: "The laborer is worthy of his hire." There was a householder of whom it is related in the Gospel that he called laborers into his vineyard at different hours of the day and paid them all in the evening their appointed hire. "Call the laborers," he said to the steward, "and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first." He paid them their wage intact, as soon as they had earned it, without deduction and without delay. To defraud laborers of their wages is one of the sins crying to heaven for vengeance. That Christian employers should sin in this regard and stoop, out of greed or avarice, to deprive of his just earnings the very servant who perhaps of all the household is the most ignorant and the most in need of money is a thing scarcely to be credited.

In addition to wages servants are entitled to board and lodging. For the work that they do, not only wages but a sufficiency of good, nourishing food, secure shelter, and decent night accommodation are due to them. It would be a crime against the health of body and even the very life

of servants to neglect to enjoin this in the clearest possible terms. To eat food that no one could possibly enjoy or relish, or that is insufficient even to satisfy the pangs of hunger; to be obliged to live and to sleep in rooms that offer no protection against wind or weather, snow or rain, heat or cold; to shiver with cold all night and all day, to work without intermission, are hardships that are sometimes imposed upon young people who, poor, sick, and weakly, are too timid to complain or to make known to their own parents the true state of the case. Sins crying to heaven for vengeance may be committed even without keeping back one single farthing of wages.

(b) The second obligation of masters to their servants is to treat them kindly. It is a hard lot to be obliged to leave home and parents to work for strangers, and to subject one's own will entirely to theirs. The thought that our Saviour Himself came into this world not to be ministered to, but to minister, has power to lighten to servants the weight of their burden. But masters also have it in their power by really kind treatment to brighten the lives of these fellow-creatures who are so dependent on them.

This kindness should show itself first of all in being careful not to overwork them. All work by which strength is overtaxed and which is too continuous and hard must be considered excessive. Kindness shows itself further by giving one's orders to servants pleasantly, in civil language, and in correcting and reproving them without anger, not scolding them or interlarding one's remarks with oaths and curses; it also consists in

treating servants well and caring for them in case of illness. The pagan centurion at Capharnaum won for himself everlasting fame and elicited the praise of our Saviour Himself. The servant was sick, and what did his master do? He went to our Saviour and implored of Him to work a miracle and heal him. Kindness, moreover, demands that we should not unnecessarily give our servants notice to leave; and that having discharged them we do not, except for grave reasons, bar the way to their finding a new place.

The simple law of human kindness demands all these things, but if we wish to practice brotherly love in the truly Christian sense then we have still a great deal more to learn, and there is scope for a great change of feeling and attitude in our relations with our servants.

Those Christian masters and mistresses who really take their title of Christian seriously will remember that St. Paul says that they must watch and render an account of the souls of their servants. An account in deed will have to be rendered before the eternal and omniscient judge. How will you be able to furnish this account if you give them, neither on week days, Sundays, nor holydays, time to go to the sacraments, to assist at Mass, or to hear a sermon; or if, giving them the proper allowance of time, you do not urge them to make use of it; or if, while urging them, you yourself neglect to set them a good example; or if, though doing all this, you do not see that the time given be actually spent in going to church? How will you stand the scrutiny if you have turned servants away from the practice

of religion and the exercise of prayer through ridicule, mockery, and bad example? No, you will never be able to endure the test; the service of your servants will bring no blessing upon you, whereas a really God-fearing servant brings a blessing on the whole house: "And the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake," for Joseph's sake who was serving in the house as a slave.

True kindness, the kindness which springs from Christian brotherly love, requires not only that you encourage your servants in good, but that you do everything in your power to keep them from evil. How will your account look if you turn a deaf ear to the whisper that your servants carry on conversations of a very loose nature in your house? If you close your eyes to surreptitious intercourse between servants of opposite sexes? If, without lifting your hand, or stirring a finger, you allow them to come and go as they please, not troubling to inquire where they go, how long they stay, and when they return home? Or, when in your own house, through your own children or perhaps in your own person, you give them cause for scandal, and spread still wider the net of temptation?

It is no use answering: "My servants do not expect of me such care for their souls; and I have not undertaken to give it. It is not by any means obligatory at this time of day; I give them board and lodging, they do their work, and as regards the rest they must look after themselves." Such reasoning will not acquit you: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his

house, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an infidel'' (1 *Tim.* v. 8). The servant is a member of your household; the parents are far away, he is under your eye; there is no one else to encourage him in good, or to hold him back from evil. Brotherly love lays so strict an obligation on us that under certain circumstances the soul of your brother can be required of you. He who could save the life of another and does not do so is like to a murderer. But to have it in our power to care for the soul of our neighbor and to neglect it is to put ourselves on a level with the arch-enemy, the destroyer of souls: ''Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal. For they watch as being able to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy and not with grief.'' May it be such an account as may bring to you and to your servants life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON XXV

On Sins Against the Life of our Neighbor

"Thou shalt not kill" (*Ex.* xx. 13).

Having fully considered the obligations and duties imposed on us by the fourth commandment, as well as the different ways in which we can offend against it, we now pass on to the explanation of the fifth commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." The catechism asks us: "What are we commanded by the fifth commandment?" Answer: "We are commanded by the fifth commandment to live in peace and union with our neighbor, to respect his rights, to seek his spiritual and bodily welfare, and to take proper care of our own life and health." We can sin against this commandment in three ways therefore: First, by injuring our neighbor as to life or limb; second, by doing ourselves any bodily injury; third, by injuring the life of our neighbor's soul.

We will confine our instruction to-day to the first of these three divisions, considering, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these two points:

I. By what sins we injure our neighbor as to life and limb.

II. What generally induces and leads to these sins.

I

The catechism asks us: "What is forbidden by the fifth commandment?" Answer: "The fifth

commandment forbids all wilful murder, fighting, anger, hatred, revenge, and bad example."

1. *Wilful murder and fighting.* There are circumstances under which it is just and right to strike or wound or even kill our neighbor. For instance, a dangerous criminal is taken prisoner and brought up for trial. He is convicted, sentenced to death, and pays the penalty with his life. Is that unlawful? No; on the contrary, it is essentially a work of justice. Some of you have been through a campaign and have fought in battle. You have seen soldiers leveling their deadly weapons against the enemy, taking aim and firing on him; and when they are accurate in their aim the enemy falls. Is that a sin? No. And you yourselves, supposing you were attacked and threatened with bodily violence, would you not be justified, if there were no other way open to you, to resist your assailant with force, even killing him, to save your own life? Certainly. Any court of law would acquit you for so acting in a case of necessity. Is it a sin for the surgeon to use his operating knife in removing and cutting away disease? Not only is it no sin, it is often a positive duty. Is it wrong for a father to strike his insubordinate son, and with a rod to administer the punishment he richly deserves? No one in his senses would deny the existence of such a right.

No sin against the fifth commandment is involved in any of the cases we have specified, or in similar instances; but where our neighbor is unjustly killed, or attacked, or wounded, there is grave sin.

In the first place we have to deal with the *unjust* killing of our neighbor. To kill any one on purpose with the intention of causing his death is murder; to murder him surreptitiously and secretly is called assassination. Murder, assassination, homicide, what terrible and awful crimes these are! What is it that makes them so terrible in their character? The murderer lays sacrilegious hands on the property of God Almighty, depriving his fellow-creature of the life which God alone has power to give, and which, therefore, He alone is entitled to take; by ending his life he robs his neighbor of the first, the last, the most precious of all gifts, without which nothing in this world can have any meaning or significance for him. He takes what he can never restore. More than this, he sends a man suddenly and often quite unpreparedly out of the very thick of the storm and stress of life, with its enmities, its hatreds, its spirit of revenge, into eternity and before the judgment-seat of God. How heavy a weight of sorrow and trouble the murderer lays on the home and the friends of the man he murders, breaking the heart of the parents, the wife, the children, the brothers and sisters! What a storm of anger and hatred, what desire for revenge his act engenders! One reads in history of cases where a murder has divided families and kept them at strife for hundreds of years, thus ever occasioning fresh sins, fresh quarrels, new and bloody deeds of violence.

It is hardly necessary to explain that the sin of murder or homicide remains the same in its character, whatever be the instrument or means used

to effect it, whether a sword, a dagger, or a knife, a bullet or poison; nor does it in any way alter matters if the murderer perpetrates his crime with his own hand or through another. Herod, although he ordered the children of Bethlehem to be killed by his soldiers, was nevertheless a murderer. This applies equally to unlawful handling and treatment of our neighbor.

But it seems out of place to talk so much about murder and killing. We have never been tempted to commit such crimes, and it is to be hoped that we never shall. Let us pass on to consider other sins against the life and bodily welfare of our neighbor, which, though less grievous, are for this very reason of more frequent occurrence.

2. We sin by injuring our neighbor as to life and limb, when we do anything to impair his health, or when, by aggravation or cruelty, we embitter or shorten his life. It would be a great mistake to suppose that it is only with sharp and deadly weapons that we can do our neighbor bodily harm. The life of the body suffers and is often wrecked altogether by grief and sorrow, anxiety and bitterness pressing on the soul. Many a child has by his disobedience, defiance, and bad conduct caused the cheeks of his parents to waste and blanch, their hair to turn gray, their appetite to forsake them, till finally lying down on a bed of sickness they went before their time to their grave, for "sadness has killed many" (*Ecclus.* xxx. 25). In the case of husband and wife, where the one has for the other neither kind words nor friendly looks nor the semblance of any kind of sympathy, but, on the contrary, by

contempt and unfaithfulness and an open display of aversion, continually wounds and grieves the other, it happens sometimes that death is not only desired and longed for, but actually comes to one so bowed down with sorrow. Do we not know parents who, either from want of proper understanding, or from motives of greed and avarice, work their children in a manner so greatly beyond their age and strength as to destroy their health prematurely and permanently? Are there not masters and mistresses who upon paltry wages and poor food exact from their servants what it would be beyond the strength of the best-nourished person to perform, demanding from the weakly work which would be too heavy for the most robust, expecting the same results from the delicate and immature which might be looked for from adults in vigorous health? Parents and employers sometimes even go so far as to try to save themselves the expense of a doctor. Truly, when we examine our consciences we can not afford to pass over the fifth commandment. Murder and homicide are not on our conscience. But is there no one who owes his gray hair to some act or conduct of ours, no sick people to whose sufferings we have contributed, no grave whose dead might still be in life if we had not vexed them so sorely?

II

We now come to our second point, which is to consider what it is that leads to and induces these sins against the bodily welfare of our neighbor. Sinful deeds are frequently the result of sinful

words and feelings. What are these sins? The catechism enumerates them: "anger, hatred, revenge, and bad example."

What is the source from which our sins of deed take their rise? It is above all *anger*. What is anger? It is a sudden violent emotion of the soul, excited by a real or fancied injury and involving a desire for revenge. The soul in anger is agitated like a sea, lashed by the wind in a storm. In its presence reasonableness disappears; the tongue seeks for words that will wound and sting, the hand gropes for any weapon that will help it to give vent to the revengeful desires of the heart. Esau, when he heard that his brother had robbed him of his father's blessing, cried out: "The days will come of the mourning of my father, and I will kill my brother Jacob" (*Gen.* xxvii. 41).

Just as anger easily leads us to sin by inflicting bodily injury upon our neighbor, so likewise does hatred. To hate is to wish evil, and there is but one step between wishing a thing and actually doing it. Shakespeare says: "Hates any man the thing he would not kill?" Hatred will very soon find the means of carrying its wishes into effect, given the occasion and the opportunity of doing so with impunity. The sons of Jacob hated their brother Joseph, and it was when he came to them alone, unarmed, far from the protection of his father, that they threw him into the pit and later sold him as a slave.

What applies to anger and hatred is equally true of envy. Envy is the brother of hatred. Rooted in the heart it overflows into evil actions. It was the envy in the heart of Cain that drove

him to murder his brother, thus giving rise to the first sin against life and limb, the first murder, the awful crime of fratricide.

When anger, hatred, and envy do not go so far as to take shape in evil actions they at all events invariably betray themselves by quarreling, by insulting, angry, and opprobrious words and strong language: "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." Angry, bitter, envious hearts take pleasure in sharp, cutting, insulting, mocking, and injurious words. One unkind speech calls forth others. Tongues answer each other returning taunt for taunt, insult for insult, and when the flow of words fails hands and fists and knives come into play. Then follow fighting, blows, and wounds, and even murder. Anger, envy, and hatred are the poisoned roots whose fruit is bloodshed and death.

Therefore, it is because these evil passions of the heart and offenses of the tongue so quickly betray us into sins against the person of our neighbor that they are forbidden by the fifth commandment. Our Saviour has Himself explained this commandment to us when He said: "You have heard that it was said to them of old, 'Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." This means that not only is the external act against the person of our neighbor forbidden, but that the inward feeling which prompts the deed is against the fifth commandment.

Anger, hatred, envy, quarreling, insulting lan-

guage, and injurious words are sins, not only because they manifest themselves in actions, not even because these actions are almost invariably bad, but because such things are evil in themselves apart from any action. The outward action itself divorced from all evil intention is not sin. To shoot a man dead unintentionally, by mistake, is not a sin; but to take a gun and level it at some one, aiming and firing deliberately, is murder, even though the shot does not as much as singe a hair of any one's head.

Dearly beloved brethren, let us be on our guard against those sins which are connected with the person of our neighbor. We all shrink in horror from the idea of murder, on account of the shame attached to it—the sentence, prison, and death. But for this very reason we but too often give free rein in our hearts to the passions of anger, hatred, and envy, and allow our tongue to run riot. With what reason did our Saviour say: "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother 'Raca' shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say 'thou fool' shall be in danger of hell fire." In other words, it is possible to sin against the fifth commandment not only by deeds directed against the life of our neighbor, but also through anger, hatred, and revenge; through the sins which anger engenders, as well as by sins of the tongue, quarreling, bad language, and injurious words. Amen.

SERMON XXVI

On Sins Against Our Own Life

"Thou shalt not kill" (*Ex.* xx. 13).

We have considered the first of the three classes of sin forbidden by the fifth commandment, namely, those by which we do our neighbor bodily injury.

The second class consists of sins against our own life. How can a man sin against his own life? He can do so, first, by taking his own life or needlessly exposing it to danger; second, by injuring his health through immoderation or excess of any kind or violent anger. What we have to consider to-day, therefore, is comprised in the four following points:

I. Suicide, or the taking of our own life.
II. Exposing ourselves needlessly to danger.
III. Shortening our own life, and, we may add,
IV. The desire for death.

I

It is self-evident that to commit suicide deliberately is the greatest wrong a man can do to his own body. The self-murderer destroys his life with his own hand. A terrible sin! What makes it so terrible? Consider well that in killing himself a man kills him who of all mankind stands nearest to him. He lays violent hands upon what belongs to God, for of all the blessings God has given us there is none bound round with

such restrictions, and over which man himself has so little jurisdiction, as his own life. "For whether we live we live unto the Lord; or whether we die we die unto the Lord. Therefore whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's" (*Rom.* xiv. 8). The last act of a suicide is a sin, a murder; as far as we can see he dies in a state of mortal sin, and so is launched into eternity before the judgment-seat of God. What sentence awaits him? What fate is in store for him? How great is the sorrow which he brings on all who love him, and who can scarcely pray for him without trembling, or think of him without a shudder? To take one's own life knowingly and willingly is a sin so grievous that the very pagans and heathens shrink back in horror from it, and the Church punishes it by refusing Christian burial to the body and omitting public intercession for the soul. There have been times and places where the horror of this sin was so great and was manifested in so forcible a manner that the body of a suicide could not be carried out through the ordinary door of the house, nor taken by the usual road to the cemetery; neither could it be laid in the common burying-ground. It is hard to understand and realize that a professing Christian, who believes in a just God and an eternal life to come, can commit a sin so grievous as the taking of his own life. It will generally be found that suicide is most frequent among those races and in those towns and neighborhoods where faith and morals are at a low ebb, and that where faith is strong and lively and morals are sound cases of suicide are extremely rare.

It can not be superfluous to warn you against the crime of suicide, for one reads every day in the papers of men of learning, intellect, and position laying hands on their own lives. This alone is enough to blunt the keenness of one's horror for it. Moreover, in novels and romances and on the stage suicide is frequently represented as something fine and heroic and beautiful, and in keeping with a great and noble mind. The temptation to end his life sometimes takes possession of a man in those moments when his load of shame and sorrow, his sense of grief and sadness seems greater than he can bear, so that it appears to him more desirable to get rid of existence than to retain it. Should such a mood ever come upon us let our first weapon be prayer. A poor woman living in the neighborhood of Cologne, overcome on one occasion by the measure of her sufferings, ran out of her house one day determined to hang herself. When she came to the place where she intended to do the deed she knelt down to say, according to her custom, five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys for a happy death. As she prayed her heart became transformed. She returned home ready to go on enduring to the end. In moments of temptation such as this let us turn our thoughts to our Saviour and to all He suffered, and to eternity toward which we are advancing. No pain, no disgrace, no sorrow on this earth is so great but that the sufferings of the suicide for all eternity are a thousand times greater.

II

Not only is self-destruction a sin against the

fifth commandment, but we are also forbidden to expose ourselves recklessly to danger, in other words, to court it. When can a man be said to be recklessly exposing himself? When he runs risks without sufficient reason.

Numbers of men are engaged on work and follow trades and industries which offer more or less danger to life. It is true that miners, who labor in the depths of the earth, for instance, wrap themselves, as it were, in their winding-sheet every morning. But their object is to earn their daily bread, and that is a sufficient reason. Soldiers in action, sailors on long sea voyages, manifestly expose and risk their lives; so also do those who in times of epidemic nurse and tend the sick in their own homes or in hospitals, or who go as missionaries to pagan countries to spread the light of the Gospel. Whether the motive of such actions be merely necessity, or whether it be heroism or pure love of others, or love of God, it is in each case a sufficient one. All that such souls have to do under such circumstances is to be more and more careful, the closer and greater the danger, to live and persevere in a state of grace. On one occasion I performed the burial service over three young fellows whom death had surprised almost before they were aware of it. Numbers of their comrades, miners and stokers, with their flags and banners, attended the ceremony, and I turned my funeral sermon into an appeal to them, to endeavor each morning, as they went to their work, to elicit in their hearts an act of perfect contrition for their sins.

No doubt many of us have all-sufficing reasons

for taking great risks. But can the same be said of many who out of mere bravado court danger by break-neck escapades and foolhardiness? No doubt it would be very wrong to put them in the same category in point of culpability with those who take their own lives, but for all that we can not always acquit them of sin any more than we can acquit them of folly.

III

To shorten and injure our own life is also forbidden by the fifth commandment. All passion, be it called by what name it may, injures health and shortens life. "Envy is the rottenness of the bones," says Holy Scripture; and, in another place, "Anger indeed killeth, and envy slayeth." The same is true of impurity and intemperance. The universal experience of medical men and others is that nothing contributes so greatly to the prolongation of life as moderation in eating and drinking, and that on the other hand immoderation in eating, drinking and smoking, especially too free an indulgence in spirituous liquors, blunts the workings of the mind, cripples the energies, undermines health, and shortens life. Glance at the number and the superfluity of taverns and saloons standing open all day and a great part of the night, so that young and old may give themselves up to the enjoyment of strong drink. Day after day, evening after evening, these places are visited by crowds of men and women with a regularity and a persistence which is entirely lacking in their service of God and their neighbor. Those who, day by day, for

years, have gone their way to the drinking saloon, and from drinkers have finally become drunkards, find themselves, sooner or later, obliged to take another road; some go to the poorhouse, some to the hospital, some to the lunatic asylum, some to the prison, and very many to the graveyard. And what becomes of the poor wife and children; what happens to the family fortunes? Disaster follows disaster, till complete ruin is the result. Such are but too often the consequences of immoderate indulgence in alcoholic liquors of all kinds, but more particularly in spirits. When brandy was first introduced into Europe it was regarded entirely as a drug and was kept carefully in the dispensary under the name of *Aqua Vitae,* "Water of Life" (*Eau de Vie*), but for a great many it is and always will be the water of death, which has destroyed more lives than all the rifles, all the swords, and all the other weapons of war.

IV

It is sinful to destroy one's own life, or to expose it recklessly to danger, or to shorten it by any means whatsoever. Now if these things are wrong, then to long for life to come to an end, or to wish one's self dead, must also be wrong. One often hears people say, "I wish I were dead." "If only I were under the ground." "The sooner I die, the better." These wishes are good or bad, holy or unholy, according to the feeling from which they spring. If they come from a heart that is impatient, discontented with its lot, full of grudging thoughts and complaints against God and men, then such wishes are sinful, and may

even be grievous sins. But it is quite a different matter when the desire for death arises from the ardent wish to offend God no longer. It once happened in a Catholic country that a criminal under sentence of death was offered the chance of a reprieve and he refused it. Why? Because he was then well prepared to make a good death, and if he was reprieved he felt he could not tell what might become of him. The longing for death is holy when it comes from the desire to be united with God and blessed for all eternity. "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." St. Paul's was a holy desire. Our individual life and the health of the body are gifts of God which we must prize and for which we should be grateful to Him, using them in His service for the good of others and for our own salvation. Precious gifts they are indeed, though not of such value that we would not willingly part with them in order to avoid sin; precious gifts, but not so priceless as our soul, as heaven, as God; precious gifts, but only rightly appreciated by those who use and spend them in the attainment of eternal life, that highest of all blessings, which God has in store for us. Amen.

SERMON XXVII

On Sins Against Our Neighbor's Soul

"Thou shalt not kill" (*Ex.* xx. 13).

We have considered the sins by which we cause bodily injury to our neighbor, as well as those directed against our own life. We now come to the different ways by which we can injure our neighbor's soul.

How is it possible to injure our neighbor's soul? We do so when we scandalize him; that is, when we deliberately tempt him to sin or voluntarily influence him, or give him occasion to commit it. Let us then consider, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

I. The nature of this sin.
II. The reasons for avoiding it.

I

All offenses by which we injure the soul of our neighbor are called sins of scandal. This word "scandal" is very often misunderstood and used in a wrong sense. Many people take it in its narrower meaning and think that it consists only in causing vexation or annoyance to others. But this is not the scandal spoken of by our Saviour, or alluded to in Holy Scripture and by the catechism. What, then, constitutes the sin of scandal? It consists in injuring the soul of our neighbor by causing him to commit sin, or putting him by some influence or action of ours into a worse state,

making his conscience harder and less upright than it was before the scandal. Who are guilty of this sin? Those who make known to others evil of which they were ignorant; who by their commands, their counsel, their promises or threats lead others to commit sin which they would otherwise not have committed; who by their point of view, their examples, their praise, their conduct, knowingly and consciously influence others for evil; who provide opportunities of sin for others which they would not otherwise have had.

Let me give you an example out of Holy Scripture. After the death of Solomon Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the kingdom of Juda and the kingdom of Israel. Although the kingdom of Juda was very much smaller than the kingdom of Israel it had one great advantage in possessing the ancient capital Jerusalem. In Jerusalem was the only temple of the true God; in it lived the high-priests, and it was there they offered the lawful sacrifices and celebrated the festivals to which the entire populace of both empires crowded. The first king of the separated kingdom of Israel feared that his subjects by going too often to the festivals and sacrifices in Jerusalem might be seized with the desire to be once more united to the kingdom of Juda. So what did he do? He erected north and south at the boundaries of his kingdom a golden calf as an idol. He himself offered sacrifice to it and he commanded his people to do the same. Now here we have clearly a sin of scandal. The king gave scandal to his people by causing them to commit the sin of idol-

atry; by erecting the idols he provided them with the occasion of sinning, and by sacrificing to the idols himself he gave them bad example. Moreover, in commanding them to adore these idols and forbidding them to go to Jerusalem to worship the true God he deliberately led them into sin. We read that the good King Azarias when struck with leprosy withdrew to an isolated house apart from his people for fear of contaminating them with his foul disease. Unfortunately, many rulers both before and after him have on the contrary done their utmost to spread amongst their subjects the errors of idolatry.

If we look round about us in the world we can see that giving scandal is not a rare thing. Thousands and thousands of people are engaged in writing, printing, selling, and lending books that positively teem with indecencies, blasphemies, and speculations of all kinds, books which neither young nor old can read without sin. Such books are eagerly devoured by multitudes. Pictures are painted, printed, and reproduced an indefinite number of times, exhibited in shop windows, bought and hung upon the walls of houses, which it would be difficult for any one to look at protractedly without sin; yet this is the class of picture which rivets the eyes of thousands every day. In large towns a great many actors of different kinds are engaged in giving representations and speaking and singing things on the stage which could not easily be listened to innocently. Such places are filled to overflowing every evening. For the sake of paltry gain opportunities are publicly and privately offered for the commission of

sins of impurity, and many make use of such opportunities. Workers in workshops and factories think nothing while going and coming in the trains of holding conversations and singing songs in the presence of young boys and girls which are quite unfit for them to hear. These poor young creatures have no choice but to listen day by day to such poison and contamination; how can they keep themselves unsullied? And besides all this what an example of sin, of unbelief, of contempt of the Church and her ordinances, is but too often given by superiors to their inferiors. How many parents are a source of scandal to their own children! How many young souls have owed their initiation to vice and the premature loss of their innocence to their intimate friends and boon companions! how many there are that give scandal, how many are ready to take it! How true are our Saviour's words: "Woe to the world because of scandals!" Woe, indeed, because of their number, but still more because in itself scandal is such grievous sin.

II

This brings us to the second point of our instruction, namely, the reasons for avoiding scandal. What should particularly deter us from giving scandal?

1. The thought that he who gives scandal by destroying those souls which Jesus Christ has ransomed with His blood is the ally of Satan.

2. The dreadful consequences of this sin.

3. The awful pronouncement by Jesus Christ: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones

that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."

These reasons are indeed powerful enough to deter any Christian from the sin of scandal. He who gives scandal is doing the work of Satan. This is nothing more than the truth, for what is Satan's business but to draw men into sin, and to keep them in it, thus bringing them to destruction and hell. Therefore, the scandal-giver is first and foremost the ally of Satan. What a disgraceful part to play! It is bad enough to have this ancient, malicious, envious, treacherous enemy of mankind always close beside us with his numberless temptations. Does hell with its evil spirits not furnish him with helpers enough? Are not his assaults only too successful as it is? Must men needs enroll themselves in his service, making themselves his most efficient allies? It is easy to understand why Satan should want to deceive souls. He has lost heaven, hope has forsaken him, hell is his portion forever, there is no salvation for him. But that men and Christians, citizens of the earth, who have it in their power to sanctify themselves, who are called to eternal life, for which they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, that they should stoop to further the devil's work is an unspeakable disgrace.

In what way does giving scandal help and promote the work of Satan? It helps in a way in which he is not able to help himself. The devil can not speak to us in audible language; he can place no material picture before us which we can

see with our bodily eyes; he can neither command nor threaten nor bribe us; he is not at liberty to tempt us as he pleases, but is restricted according as God allows. When we give scandal we do for the devil that which with all the resources of hell he is not able to do for himself. O the ignominy, the sin, the shame of scandal!

Further, let us review the results and consequences of scandal. What are its results? First, it causes him who actually gives the scandal to commit sin, and next, it leads into sin those who take it. These last are generally no small number. Many listen to and laugh at unclean, unrestrained conversations in workshops and factories. Those who have been tempted themselves tempt others in their turn, repeating these speeches and songs, and so making for others the same occasions of sin that they have had themselves. One single scandal grows and flourishes long after it has passed from the mind of the giver of it, perhaps when he is dead and his bones have been moldering for hundreds of years; and it may be that it will live right up to the very day of judgment. It has been said that one book of the godless and unbridled French writer Voltaire has given rise to more mortal sins than there are letters in the whole volume, and this is probably understating the case, rather than overstating it. Though the author of it has long since gone to his grave the evil book lives on and is read by hundreds. "Woe to the world because of scandal!"

If scandal in general is a thing so dreadful, then to give scandal to the innocent is the worst of all. Of this kind of scandal our Saviour says:

"He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." How precious in the sight of God is the youth and innocence of the souls of children; redeemed by Christ and washed pure in His precious blood they are tenderly loved by Him and destined for the kingdom of heaven, and His curse and vengeance will surely fall on those who shall dare to snatch them out of His hand and lead them along the road to perdition. Better, a thousand times, they had been cast into the sea with a millstone round their necks, than that they should live on to give more such scandal.

In truth, the sin of scandal is a terrible one. It is terrible in its own nature, awful in its consequences, and in the punishment it merits. "Woe to the world because of scandal!" There is but one resolution to make after this meditation: O my Saviour, I promise Thee I will never give scandal. May my tongue cleave to my mouth, my hands wither away, my feet grow powerless, rather than I should be a cause of sin to others. I will give no scandal, neither will I take it; and when the tempter approaches me I will drive him away with the words which Thou Thyself madest use of—"Get thee behind Me, Satan"—I will neither see you nor hear you nor follow you. Depart from me; I am and mean to be for all eternity the faithful disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

On Sins Against Chastity

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."
"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (sixth and ninth commandments of God).

From the fifth we now pass on to the sixth and ninth commandments. These two commandments are classed together because both are directed against impurity, the sixth commandment forbidding any outward action which violates purity, while the ninth forbids the interior and hidden offenses of the heart against this holy virtue.

The sixth and the ninth commandments forbid: (1) the sin of adultery and all sins against purity; (2) all that leads to impurity. We have to deal, therefore, with two great classes of sins, the first consisting in the actual violation of purity, the second in all that prepares the way for it.

Beginning with the first of these two classes we next ask what constitutes a sin against purity? To this we reply: (1) Impure thoughts and desires when they are voluntary. (2) Immodest conversations, jokes, and songs. (3) The taking pleasure in hearing or reading impure things. (4) Immodest demeanor and behavior.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will consider:

I. Deliberately impure thoughts and desires.
II. Immodest conversations, jokes, and songs.

I

What, then, is this sin of impurity? Just as we often designate the virtue of chastity by the word "purity," so we call what is contrary to chastity impurity or uncleanness. Nevertheless, impurity is not to be confounded with a want of cleanliness. We call any one unclean who goes about with dirty hands and unwashed face, unkempt hair, and torn and dirty clothing. But this does not make him unchaste or impure. What, then, is impurity? It is anything that offends against modesty. And what is modesty? Modesty is the instinct to be found in all men who are not utterly depraved, which tells them to cover the body, to abstain from certain words; which causes them to blush at certain modes of speech, to repress the curiosity of the eyes and to feel contaminated even by a thought of an impure nature. After their sin, Adam and Eve noticed that they were naked; their instinct of modesty was awakened and they covered themselves with fig-leaves. Whatever is against modesty is also against chastity. Modesty is the companion, the guardian, the teacher and protector of chastity.

Amongst sins of unchastity we must reckon in the first place deliberate thoughts and desires against purity. Thoughts and desires are not the same, although they frequently go together. We have an impure thought when anything takes shape in our mind which is against modesty; an impure desire when we long to see or hear or do what is immodest.

And first, before everything else, let it be quite clear to us that these thoughts and desires are

sins only when they are voluntary. When can they be said to be voluntary? When they are sought and retained and harbored with enjoyment, after one has become conscious that they are wrong. An innkeeper might receive into his hostelry guests of all kinds without knowing them, even though some of them looked a little suspicious; but as soon as he realizes that he has a thief or a highwayman or a housebreaker among them he shows him the door. Otherwise he becomes their accomplice.

But impure thoughts and desires, if they are wilful, are sins and very grievous sins. You may reply: "I have always looked upon my thoughts at least as concerning no one but myself." Do not be under any illusion, this may be the case before an earthly tribunal, but it will not hold good before the divine judgment-seat. Men see the exterior, but, as Holy Scripture tells us, "the Lord looketh into the heart." Human laws can only deal with exterior actions, judging and punishing them according to what appears on the surface; what goes on in the heart of man does not come within their scope. The Romans used to say: "The praetor" (that means the judge) "does not judge of internal things." In this sense, thoughts and desires are scot-free. But they are not so before God, the all-holy and omniscient. If unchaste actions displease Him so greatly He will not hold innocent and undeserving of punishment those who delight in the thought and desire of such things. "Whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." These are the

words of our Saviour Himself, and they make it clear that unchaste desires are sinful and constitute adultery in the mind.

To this we must add something more. In cases where these thoughts and desires are wholly internal those who are guilty in this way often think nothing of them and look upon them as much less important than they really are. Interior ailments, such as, for instance, heart or lung trouble, are harder to recognize and are therefore much more easily overlooked than other diseases that are visible to all, though really they are often more deadly and dangerous in their character.

Moreover, these wilful impure thoughts have the further danger of being so easily repeated that their number may be multiplied beyond conception. Other sins require opportunity, time, place, courage, which may be lacking; while the fear of exposure, punishment, disgrace may hold us back. But we can indulge in these hidden sins by day or by night, alone or in company, in church, or walking in the street. They swarm in incredible numbers about the man who harbors them. There are countries in which locusts infest the land by millions, doing more damage and being a greater plague than poisonous serpents or hovering lions would be.

Now, how can we guard against these sins? Who can say that his heart is entirely exempt from such thoughts and desires? There is one powerful means to be used as a preventive against them, namely, watchfulness. Whoever is engaged in defending a fortress in time of war must keep a lookout for the enemy and be on his guard ready

to offer him resistance before his little garrison is overwhelmed. "Watch and pray." Keep, therefore, yourselves carefully. To such evil thoughts and desires as may have wormed themselves, unsought, unexpected, and unnoticed, into your heart, and which seem almost suddenly to have assumed an alluring shape and form in your mind, offer a sturdy resistance. You say to me, I know all this very well, but these thoughts come upon me without warning; they had already taken up their abode with me before I was aware that they were evil. The more I resist them and the more determined is my resistance, the more they persist and the more violently they attack and assault me. Now be certain that so long as you are unconscious of the evil of these thoughts and desires, so long as you resist them, they are not wilful, or at least not entirely wilful. A thief succeeds in gaining access to your house. If you do not know of his presence, you can not turn him out. You become aware of it, and you order him to go. Well, now, what then? He opposes you. You fight with him, but he is stronger than you. You call for help, but no one comes. Is it your fault if he robs your house? No; defend yourself, therefore, as well as you can; recall the presence of God, think of death, the grave, hell. Invoke your guardian angel, the Blessed Virgin Mary, that powerful guardian of pure souls, fly to the wounds of your Saviour. If the abominable thoughts leave you, you have won an easy victory. But, if they still persist, then you must fight still harder, and win yet more gloriously. Even should you feel that you have

not come through the battle unscathed remember that the scars of a warrior, though painful, are honorable. "He that shall endure to the end, he shall be saved."

II

After sins of the heart we pass on to sins of the tongue, and we find enumerated as offenses against the sixth commandment indecent conversations, jokes, and songs.

I do not for a moment deny that it would be a mistake to look upon every unguarded word or coarse expression as indecency. How are we to decide what really is indecent? Everything spoken that is the expression of immodest thoughts and desires, and which is calculated to evoke similar feelings in those who hear them, must be classed as immodest, and the same applies to jokes and songs.

I should like to have a voice of thunder in which to cry to you: Do not indulge in language of this kind; do not sing such songs; do not make such jokes. Refuse to listen to them, or to laugh at them.

Why so? First, because it is a comparatively easy matter to abstain from the use of the tongue in this way. It comes about sometimes that thoughts creep into our mind and take our soul by storm and hold it fast, which we can not chase away, and against which it is hard, very hard, to struggle; but we are master of our tongue and it can not speak or sing against our will. It is a far easier matter to keep ourselves from in-

decency in speech than to restrain the evil thoughts that are only imperfectly under control.

There is another feature of the case which adds considerably to the gravity of the sins of the tongue against the sixth commandment. We can assert unconditionally that indecent language, songs, and jokes are always voluntary. For the tongue can not utter what the mind has not conceived, nor can it talk aloud against our will. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Moreover, for any Catholic, it is clearly an aggravation of his guilt that it is the tongue which commits these sins of speech—the tongue that is above all our members specially consecrated by contact in holy communion with the body of Christ.

Finally, the sin of all indecency of language is greatly increased by the fact that it involves almost inevitably the giving of scandal. No one indulges in this kind of talk except for others to hear it. Some one always hears it; it may be many people, or it may be only a few. As they listen similar feelings are aroused in them, and they sin, too. The thoughts recur again and again, and they sin each time anew. So, again, they sin by laughing at what they have heard and still more by repeating these improper anecdotes or songs, who can say how many times or to how many people, thus multiplying and propagating the evil with which they have been infected.

In view of what we have been considering, what can we think of the foolish excuse so often brought up in defence of indecency in speech, "It

is only fun"? Surely it is a barbarous kind of fun that injures the souls of those who listen to it. Or, again, you say, "we only want to do what every one else does." If every one does this kind of thing, all the greater reason why you should abstain from it. If you had to walk through a hospital full of patients stricken with pestilence, there would be the greater need for carefulness on your part, that you might not catch the infection. "No children were present." That it is even a greater sin to engage in such talk in the presence of children does not alter the fact that to do so before grown-up people is grievously wrong. There is no excuse for indecent speech; it is wilful, it can be avoided, and it always involves scandal. O my Saviour, can I not promise Thee that my tongue, which Thy sacred body has touched, which has been purpled by Thy sacred blood, shall never be desecrated by foul words? May I rather become dumb. If I am obliged to listen to such things and can not go away, I will by my silence at least make it clear that there is nothing more contemptible or disgraceful in my eyes than to make such speeches, or to sing such songs, in the presence of those whom Thy passion has redeemed. Amen.

SERMON XXIX

On Temptations Against Purity

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."
"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (sixth and ninth commandments of God).

Two things are forbidden by the sixth and the ninth commandments. First, all sins against chastity, to which belong impure thoughts and desires, indecency in speech, as well as immodest jokes and songs. We said last Sunday all that is necessary on this subject. To the sins against chastity must be further added the reading or hearing with pleasure what is contrary to modesty. Assuredly if indecent speech is a sin, it must be equally wrong to enjoy reading or hearing such things. Finally, we must mention also want of modesty in the control of our eyes (for instance, in dressing and undressing, bathing, etc.) and, finally, immodest actions, in regard to which I will confine myself to giving you the warning of St. Paul: "But fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you as becometh saints" (*Eph.* v. 3).

But the sixth and the ninth commandment forbid not only actual sins against chastity, but also everything which leads and conduces to this sin. We are strictly forbidden, I need hardly say, to set fire to a powder magazine; but in addition to this prohibition there are regulations forbidding us to bring fire or light anywhere in the proximity

of the building; warning us against tapping on the walls with an iron hammer, or walking on the ground near it with nails in our shoes. Why? Because gunpowder, being highly inflammable, a single spark would suffice to blow up the whole magazine. Man is more prone to sins against the sixth commandment than to any other class of sin. The smallest provocation sets impure thoughts and desires aflame, causing only too often a wild outburst of passion which results in a complete conflagration. Whoever wants to avoid temptations against purity must also avoid the things that lead to them. These may be said to be principally five in number:

I. Curiosity of the eyes.
II. Immodest dress.
III. Bad company and the reading of bad books.
IV. Indecent plays and dances.
V. Drunkenness and idleness.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will spend a few moments in thinking over each of these points in turn.

I

We are easily led into sins of impurity by *curiosity of the eyes,* by inquisitive looks that want to see everything. Of all our senses that of sight is the keenest, the quickest, the most far-reaching, and the impressions conveyed to us by our eyes are deeper than any others. But how easy it is for curious eyes to dwell upon sinful objects, or upon what leads to sin. They look and linger and are delighted, and in a short time the whole soul

is aflame with sinful passion. Death, which is mortal sin, has come in at the windows of the soul, in other words, it has entered through the eyes. Therefore, whoever wishes to guard against sins of impurity must restrain the eyes, as we would restrain a young untamed horse, keeping custody over them, guarding and subduing them, turning them away and closing them, and gaining complete mastery over them.

II

A further danger to chastity lies in *immodest dress.* Dress is immodest that does not sufficiently cover the body, or that is designed in other ways to appeal to the senses. As long as the Catholic Church has existed preachers have denounced and declared war against immodest dress as a source of and an incentive to sin, and an occasion of giving and taking scandal. Excuses in plenty there have always been to defend this disgraceful practice on the score of health, convenience, heat, custom, or fashion. But such arguments have no value; if a style of dress is immodest and leads to sin nothing in the world can justify it.

III

Bad company and the reading of bad books. No occasion of sin is more dangerous, more frequent, more disastrous than bad companions; and unless they are sedulously avoided it is impossible to preserve purity of heart. What takes place when clear water is mixed with the dirt and dust of the street? The dirt is not made clean,

but the water becomes dirty. By what means can we recognize whether certain society, or companionship, friendships, or acquaintances be bad? We know a lion even from afar by his roar, a serpent by the hiss. How can we distinguish bad company? By the roar, namely, the indecent songs; by the hiss, coarse unbridled language. Shun, and give as wide a berth as ever you can, to all who hold such conversations, or who sing such songs.

A still greater danger perhaps to the virtue of purity lies in the reading of bad books. The number of such books and publications is great; they are cheap to buy, convenient to borrow, and easily concealed. Their poison has an allurement for many, but, if we recall the class of people by whom they are eagerly read and devoured, we can form some idea of the harm to souls which this literature produces. "Who loves danger will perish in it."

IV

Indecent plays and dances constitute also an incentive to sin against the sixth and the ninth commandment. All plays are by no means indecent, but when one sees in little towns and still more in big ones the stuff that is offered to curious eyes and ears in theaters of all classes, one no longer wonders why the stream of impurity and vice grows ever wider and deeper, its waves beating against the very hearts of children, its ravaging floods working havoc even among the old and gray-haired. The popularity of a play is often measured by the extent of its indecency, and

managers naturally take trouble to procure for the public what is according to its taste. Dress, gestures, language, singing, music, applause, all seem impregnated with the vice of impurity. One theater can work more havoc than ten churches have power to repair, for the simple reason that it is always easier to flatter and encourage the passions than to bring them under control again. Of plays can be said what St. Francis said of mushrooms: "The best of them is good for nothing."

The same applies to balls and dancing. It is not my intention to lay down that all dancing is sinful. I wish to say nothing which is exaggerated or which departs from the strict truth. What I assert is that dancing, as we see it carried on, till late into the night, to the sound of noisy music, in places where levity rules supreme, is a constant source of danger and a temptation to sins of impurity, whether in thought, in desire, in looks, words or deeds, or all of them together. Young people of both sexes frequent these dances where unrestraint and license abound, and excessive drinking is the rule and not the exception, just at the age when they are most inexperienced, and when their passions can be most easily appealed to. There is nothing to help them, but everything to lead them astray. Does such a picture not make you wish to keep far from such places? Is it not enough to determine your parents to prevent you going, or, if they can not do this, at least to go with you themselves? You need not tell me that I have laid my finger on a sore place, and that talking about it will do no

good. It may be so. We shall still see the newspapers no doubt crowded with announcements of these balls and dances, and those who scarcely ever manage to put in an appearance in church will be the most regular attendants at them; those who can barely rouse themselves to approach the Lord's Table once a year will continue to be most ardent supporters of the dance halls. But if other people do not do their duty, is that a reason why I should hold my tongue like a dumb dog? I say it, and I repeat it, revels such as I have described are a canker eating the very heart out of our social life, dangerous to morals, to self-restraint, to prosperity, and above all to innocence. Any one by opening their eyes can see that the more pious, the more respectable a girl is the less she will have anything to do with these festivities; and that, on the contrary, the more frivolous and dissipated the young man is the more unrestrainedly he gives himself up to this form of amusement.

V

Finally, to the things that conduce to sins of impurity, we must add drunkenness and idleness.

Drunkenness. There is a pagan proverb which say that drunkenness and impurity always go together. Where the first is to be found the second will not long be absent. Therefore, whoever wants to avoid impurity must also take care to be temperate.

Idleness. An indolent, inactive, lazy life leads also almost unfailingly to sins of impurity. Why is a mountain stream always as clear and pure

as a mirror? Because its waters are never still. They take their rise in lofty mountains, and they race and hurry forward day and night, through narrow gorges and wild valleys, springing over steep rocks, finally reaching the open plains. But the water in ponds, closed round, without either inlet or outlet, quickly becomes muddy and dirty. It is overgrown with marshy weeds and slimy toads take up their abode there. It is stagnant water. Such is the soul of the idler, which imperceptibly becomes the home of evil thoughts and foul desires. "The devil finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

I have not a doubt that you are every one determined to avoid henceforth all sins against purity, for every one who has any feeling of modesty and honor left must come to such a resolution. But, if you want your resolution to be strong, you must go further and seriously take steps to shun everything that leads to these sins. The first is of no avail without the second. As well might one hope to preserve snow and ice in the full light of a midsummer sun. Do not be so foolish. If you really wish to keep pure then you must fly from everything that suggests and leads to impurity. Place your determination and purpose under the protection of the pure Mother of God, and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and pray every day for the help of divine grace. If you act in this way your resolution will not only stand firm, but will win for you in the end the salvation of your immortal soul. Amen.

SERMON XXX

On the Avoidance of Impurity

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."
"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (sixth and ninth commandments of God).

We have considered what is forbidden by the sixth and the ninth commandment. These sins require to be avoided with even greater care than other offenses, because in themselves they are more shameful, and in their consequences more terrible. For our instruction to-day we will consider shortly, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

I. The shamefulness.
II. The terrible consequences of sins against purity.

I

The first reason for avoiding sins against purity in a special way, is on account of their shamefulness. It is usually by sins of this nature that innocence is destroyed, and the image of God in the soul defaced. "Do not err," says St. Paul, "neither fornicators . . . nor adulterers . . . shall possess the kingdom of God." What does this mean? It means that impurity is a grievous sin which shuts us out from eternal life. There must be no deceiving ourselves, or allowing others to deceive us on this point. "Do not err," not only is impurity a grievous sin, but one may go the length of saying that it is usually the first

grievous sin by which men, either in childhood, in youth, or in later life lose their innocence. As long as a man has not sinned against the virtue of purity he is, generally speaking, in a state of grace. Special odium and disgrace attach to this sin because by it the soul, created by God, redeemed by His blood, stamped with His likeness, and consecrated as His temple, is desecrated and becomes a neglected ruin, choked up with abominable thoughts, unclean desires, and with things even yet more foul.

The soul when in a state of grace is with justice called the child of God. To realize the shamefulness of sins against purity it is sufficient to recall the fact that the soul is a spiritual, a free, and an immortal being. Man consists of two parts, body and soul. Through his soul he is reasonable and free, master of his actions, immortal, endowed with intellect, allied to the angels. "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels," says the Psalmist. By his body he is related to the animals, and even to the very dust of the earth. Which of these two is destined to rule, and to become the head and the master? The soul. And what is to be the subject of this rule? The body. It is the body that must obey. And now glance at the shame of impurity. By it the free spirit is degraded to the position of servant and slave of the body and of the flesh; the right order is inverted; he commands who ought to obey; he obeys who ought to command. It is told of a certain Roman emperor that when engaged in war against the king of Persia he was defeated and taken prisoner. What followed?

He was forced as a slave to run on foot beside the horse of his conqueror, who in mounting and dismounting placed his foot on the bowed neck of the former emperor of Rome. It was a degrading enough position even for a slave, but humiliating beyond measure for one who had filled the most exalted throne in the world. Impurity subjects a man to an equally great humiliation. The soul, instead of occupying its rightful position as ruler of the body, for which it is fully qualified, debases itself and becomes not only the slave, but the willing slave of the flesh: "Man when he was in honor did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts and is made like to them."

II

Further, sins of impurity are to be held in greater horror and avoided even more strenuously than other sins, on account of their results. For (1) impurity taints a man body and soul; (2) it leads him into many other sins, and (3) it brings him to misery, disgrace, and shame, and finally to eternal damnation.

1. Impurity taints a man, body and soul. It poisons the body. All sins and vices by which the soul is disfigured leave their mark, more or less, upon the body also. Anger shows itself in the kindling eye, the swelling veins, the violent movements; pride is evident in the gait, and in the whole deportment; men sometimes bear the signs of intemperance, the craving for drink, so clearly imprinted on their countenance that they are recognizable even to a child. Is it likely, then,

that impurity, that sin peculiar to the flesh, will leave no bodily trace? Its marks are engraven slowly and gradually, but in a manner more clear, more shameful, more devastating than those of any other sin; they infect the whole body, poisoning the blood and destroying even the bones to their very marrow: "He that joineth himself to harlots will be wicked; rottenness and worms shall inherit him" (*Ecclus.* xix. 3).

Impurity taints also the soul. The plague furnishes a true image of its hideousness. This disease appears first in a number of small red spots which cover the body of the person infected, but which rapidly develop into ugly, evil-smelling, painful boils, contagious in their nature, and which speedily end in death. Impurity is the plague of the soul. Beginning in a multitude of impure thoughts, which soon develop into desires and from desires pass into words and deeds, it robs the soul of all delight in prayer, of all interest in serious things, and infects with its venom every incautious person who comes into contact with it.

2. Impurity leads to other sins and vices. It leads to sins against the first commandment: neglect of prayer, doubts against faith, and finally to total unbelief; it turns men into rebels against the third commandment, keeping them away from the services of the church; also against the fourth commandment, for an unchaste man is not likely to be a respectful, submissive and obedient son to his parents; against the fifth commandment: it was only because St. John the Baptist interfered with their life of adultery that

Herod and Herodias had him put to death. It was the vice of impurity which ruined King Solomon, author of so many of the books of Holy Scripture, and builder of the great temple in Jerusalem, and which led him in his old age to idolatry—to erect temples to false gods. What is the greatest factor in causing unworthy confessions and communions? Those sins of impurity which young and old are not ashamed to commit, though they are ashamed to confess them. The more frequently and the longer this form of vice is indulged in the more the temptation grows and the stronger passion becomes; prayer at the same time is resorted to more and more rarely, and grace becomes scantier and scantier. What is the end? Not always, but very often, it is impenitence and obstinacy in sin.

3. Impurity brings men to misery, disgrace, and shame, and finally to eternal damnation.

To misery. An impure soul seeks for peace, but does not find it. It is a prey to interior and exterior misery; disquiet, sadness, the gnawings of conscience, weakness of will are eating it away; it would fain shake off the habit of sin but can not, and finally despairs of all recovery.

To shame and disgrace. Although the world is a source of impurity, it despises the impure man, who is thus disgraced before men and before God. The depth of disgrace to which impurity sinks in the eyes of God can be gauged by the favor which a pure soul finds in His sight. "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! For the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men." To describe the

shame of the vice of impurity we must invert these words: "O! how hideous is an impure generation! The remembrance of it is such that it is better neither to think nor to speak of it. It is without honor before men, and it is disgraceful before God."

Do you want to know how greatly the pure and holy God hates these sins? In the days of Noe mankind was steeped in vice of this kind; "man was flesh," as the Holy Scriptures tell us, which means he was given up to the sins of the flesh. What did almighty God do? He decided to destroy the world and He did indeed exterminate this wicked and corrupt generation. He opened the flood-gates of heaven, and the waters overflowed the earth; rain fell day and night, and the waters rose higher and higher till the whole human race was swallowed up. How did God execute vengeance upon the corrupt people of Sodom and Gomorrha? Not this time with water, but with fire and sulphur He swept them from the face of the earth. But what is this water, what this fire, in comparison with the eternal fire of hell? "Do not err," says St. Paul, "neither fornicators . . . nor adulterers shall possess the kingdom of God." And if they do not attain to the kingdom of God, what is to be their portion? Nothing is left for them but hell: "Her steps go in as far as hell." Behold the end of the vice of impurity: hell and eternal damnation. St. Alphonsus tells us that impurity leads more souls to hell than all the other sins and vices put together. St. Teresa, who was allowed in a vision to look upon hell, said that impure souls fell into it like flakes of

snow in a winter storm. Impurity brings misery, shame, and disgrace on man, and finally leads him to eternal damnation.

In considering all these things, dearly beloved brethren, we are bound to admit that the hideousness and the destructiveness of the sin of impurity are greater than we can describe. It follows, therefore, that we can never hate it sufficiently, or be too careful in avoiding it. If any among us are conscious of being guilty in this regard let such a one not lose courage, as though there were no salvation for him, for it is possible to repent of such sins, to confess and obtain forgiveness for them and to expiate them by penance. Even should we be hard pressed by great and violent and grievous temptations, let us remember that by the grace of God, the protection of His most pure Mother, and the support of our guardian angel, such temptations can be overcome. When they take hold of us let us turn our thoughts to the shame and disgrace, the results and the ultimate end of such sins—hell. "In all thy works remember thy last end and thou wilt never sin." Amen.

SERMON XXXI

On the Means of Preserving Purity

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (*Matt.* v. 8).

Although we have devoted several Sundays to the consideration of the sins against the sixth and ninth commandments, and everything that is likely to lead to them, still it might happen to any one, whether young or old, married or single, to find themselves in doubt as to whether something was or was not a sin against purity. Now, in such a case, what are we to do? We shall do well to consult our confessor, and in the meantime it is best carefully to avoid what we are doubtful of. Why should we ask a confessor for advice on this subject? Because he is accessible to every one, and we are accustomed to make known to him the faults and weaknesses of our soul; he will listen patiently to our questions and will know how to answer them, giving us the antidote for sin, and indicating the means of avoiding it, which will set our conscience at peace.

But, you may reply, several days or even weeks may go by before I get the opportunity of laying the matter before my confessor. What am I to do in the meantime? You must try in the meantime carefully to avoid what you are doubtful of. Why? Because it is doubtful. If you have a glass in your hand full of some liquid which is unfamiliar to you, and the thought occurs to you

that it may possibly be poison you will surely not drink it, however thirsty you may be, until you are satisfied as to its nature.

Now, in considering the sixth and the ninth commandments, we must not merely confine ourselves to the contemplation of the different sins of impurity and their consequences; we must go on to see what are the means by which we may guard against these offenses. He would be a bad doctor who contented himself with making a careful diagnosis of a case, and examining into the causes and the effects of a disease, without also endeavoring to the best of his ability to discover and apply the remedies by which the disease may be cured, and its further progress arrested.

So let us ask ourselves what means we can use to guard ourselves against the sin of impurity. First, we can shun all bad company and occasions of sin; secondly, we can carefully guard our senses, especially our eyes; thirdly, in temptation we can recommend ourselves to God and to the Blessed Virgin; fourthly, we can earnestly pray for the virtue of purity; fifthly, we can often receive the holy sacraments; sixthly, we can remember that God sees everything and that we may die at any moment.

Well, you will perhaps reply, no doubt you have given us a number of very powerful and efficacious remedies, but who can possibly remember so many? For that very reason I will divide them in such a way that you will able to recall them almost automatically. We distinguish two classes of remedies against sins of impurity, namely:

I. Those to be used before temptation, and when we are free from temptation.

II. Those to be used when we are actually tempted. Let us consider them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

Let us begin with the means to be made use of before temptation and when we are free from it. These again fall into two divisions: those which we hold in our own hands and those for which we must look to others. There are two means which we hold in our own hands: the avoidance of all bad company and occasions of sin, and the custody of our senses, especially our eyes. We have already seen how easily bad company leads to sins against purity, and how want of restraint of the senses, especially of the eyes, gives rise to impure thoughts and desires, and to other offenses. How, then, can you hope to avoid sins of impurity if you neither avoid bad company nor attempt to keep your senses, especially your eyes, under control. You can never succeed. "Oh," you say, "I will be very careful!" No, that is just it; you are not careful. "God will protect me." How can any one hope for divine protection who refuses to fly from danger, and neglects to keep guard over his eyes? He is unworthy of God's help. "He who loves danger will perish in it." What should we say of a consumptive who deliberately exposed himself to a cutting east or north wind? We should say that he was courting a serious illness, if not risking his life.

Other means to guard against temptation are within our reach, bringing with them help from outside sources. Earnest prayer to God and His blessed Mother for the virtue of purity is a notable one. The Book of Wisdom says: "And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought Him" (*Wis.* viii. 21). Wherever we find an example and model of the angelic virtue we find also a love of prayer. The pagans who did not ask for purity sank into the lowest depths of immorality and abomination. Do those men who to-day deny God and hold prayer in contempt, as a rule lead clean lives? It may be that as far as the world sees they refrain from the works of impurity; it may be that some few honestly set a high standard before them and adhere to it, but how can we suppose that they can keep their hearts and their thoughts pure, when most of them do not admit that purity is a virtue at all, much less one of exquisite beauty to be zealously watched and guarded. Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, if we wish to keep and foster this virtue we must pray a great deal to almighty God and to His blessed Mother. By praying for it we show that it is precious to us, and such prayer is always answered, for it must be God's will to grant us that virtue which is so dear to Him.

Besides praying we should often receive the sacraments. What becomes of a vine which is neglected and left to itself? It lies on the ground, its leaves and buds are covered with dust, and it shows no sign of fruit. To enable it to bear fruit the vinedresser must bind it to a stake, to which

it will cling and, supported by which, it will grow freely and gain strength. The owner of a homestead will always choose to train his vine over a trellis or against the wall of his house, so that the buds may be exposed to the air and the sun, for in this way it will bring forth good grapes. Do you believe that a soul can bring forth the beautiful virtue of purity if it is left to its own resources? No, in such a case it can only trail upon the ground, or at the best not rise above the dust. But if, by the grace of our divine Saviour, we let ourselves be guided and supported in the sacrament of Penance, by His sacred hand which upholds us in temptation, raises us when we have fallen, and strengthens us when we are weak; if we cling with all our hearts to the Blessed Sacrament, the bread of the strong, the wine of virgins, then, dearly beloved brethren, our purity is safe. Thousands of books have recommended this remedy, which is the panacea used by the saints; it has been known for hundreds of years, and best of all it has been tested and tried by the experience of millions. When some men and women, exposed to the allurements of the world and beset at the most dangerous age with temptations of all kinds, succeed in leading pure lives, not only outwardly, but keeping also their hearts and their thoughts pure, it is because they go regularly to confession and receive often the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. These and these only triumph; and, if even they sometimes fail, with others without watchfulness, without prayer, without the sacraments, be likely to gain the victory!

II

The means to employ when temptation has actually taken hold of us are as follows: we must recommend ourselves to God and the Blessed Virgin. That is the first and the principal thing. What does a helpless child do when he sees a fierce dog rushing toward him? He calls out to his father and mother, whether they be near or far away; he knows they can help him, and that they will not leave him in the lurch when he is in danger. What can be better and more appropriate at the moment of temptation than to call upon the omniscient and almighty God, our Father and Redeemer, for His help and protection. "Lord, save me, or I perish." What can be more efficacious at such moments than to appeal for succor to the Virgin of virgins—to her to whom it was given to crush the serpent's head? Such a prayer is also a sign, it affords a well-founded presumption that we are not voluntarily admitting the temptation into our hearts.

There still remains something more for us to do. At the moment of temptation we must remind ourselves, first, that God sees everything, and, secondly, that we may die at any moment. People who are subject to sudden fits of faintness or of cramp often make a practice of carrying a little bottle containing some pungent essence the smell of which, or a few drops of which sprinkled on their forehead, has power to revive them when threatened with an attack, and in many cases such a remedy is very useful. So should we in a moment of temptation call up some powerful, striking thought in our heart which is calculated

to dispel thoughts of impurity. God sees me. He reads my heart. What would happen to me were I at this moment to commit sin and then die! What a death! What an eternity! "In all thy works remember thy last end and thou wilt never sin."

Dearly beloved brethren, it is true that our temptations against purity are numerous and violent in their character, and that our opportunities of sin are many and alluring. But it is equally true that the preservatives against impurity are numerous, efficacious, and reliable. They have been well tried, and are at the service of every one. It is for us to make use of them. If we do so we shall gain the victory, and shall merit the glorious reward promised by the lips of our Saviour to those who preserve this virtue: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." There is nothing more beautiful on earth than a pure heart; nor is there to be found in heaven any greater delight than the contemplation of God's most holy and divine countenance. Amen.

SERMON XXXII

On the Basis of the System of Property

"Thou shalt not steal" (*Ex.* xx. 15).

We will now pass on from the sixth commandment to the seventh: "Thou shalt not steal." While the eighth commandment forbids all sins injurious to the life, both corporal and spiritual, of our neighbor, the seventh is directed to offenses against his property. By property is understood anything he possesses outside his person; such as clothing, furniture, houses, cattle, lands, meadows, woods, money, in fact all his goods and chattels and everything which he is entitled to call his own, and whatever he is free to sell or exchange, give away, leave by will, lend, alter or change, make use of or destroy. To say of anything "that is mine" implies at the same time that it does not belong to any one else.

The seventh commandment forbids us to injure the property of our neighbor. Now, before we can consider in detail by what sins we can be guilty of this, it is necessary, or at any rate useful, to convince ourselves that the rights of property are real and genuine. If there be no such thing as property, then clearly there can be no such thing as a sin against it. Let us, therefore, first, with the help of the Holy Spirit, apply ourselves to understanding on what foundation the system of property rests, and we shall see that it has its origin:

I. In nature.
II. In history and in religion.

I

The system of property has its origin in the nature of things and in the nature of man.

There are some things which by their very nature can not be appropriated, such as for instance air, the light and warmth of the sun, the cold of winter. They are the common property of all men, and it will not occur to any one to claim them as his own. But, on the contrary, those things which generally constitute property are peculiarly adapted to be held in ownership. No one will contest that the house which a man builds expressly for himself and his family to live in is likely to be most appreciated and valued by those for whom it was built; that they would only part with it reluctantly at the highest possible price or give it up under compulsion. That most things are adapted to be the private property of individuals can be at once demonstrated by the fact that all the goods of the world are in the possession of some one and pass from one to another by means of exchange, purchase, inheritance, or gift.

Human nature, since the Fall, at all events, is so constituted that men take the most trouble to guard those things which belong to themselves. A man will expend his best energies in cultivating the land that is his own, he will administer to the best advantage those things with regard to which his own interest requires him to exercise economy; he will do his best work when the result of his labors is entirely his own gain.

No amount of fine speeches will affect the truth of the proposition that the goods of the earth, as well as the nature of man himself, who dwells upon the earth, speak clearly in justification of the idea of property. But let us see what is to be said against this principle, and what has in point of fact actually been urged.

It is stated that it would be beautiful if the disparity between rich and poor could be removed, and an equal distribution made of the goods of this world. Certainly it would be beautiful, but it is impossible. Why impossible? First of all, because, in order to make things even, it would be necessary to deprive of a part of their property those who have more than their share, and they would never consent to surrender it of their own free will. Further, when an equal distribution had been arrived at, there would still be the portion of every new-born child to provide, as well as the task of dividing the possessions of each man as he died among the whole human race. It would be nothing but continual division. But even if all these difficulties could be surmounted the differences in men would still have to be reckoned with. The inequalities between the strong and the weak, the industrious and the lazy, the clever and the stupid, the healthy and the sick, the provident and the improvident, would still exist, and would very soon bring about a state of things quite as unequal as before.

Another class of dreamers says, "No, that is not our plan. It would be impossible to distribute things equally; moreover, by so doing, property would merely be equalized, not done away with."

"What do you mean by that?" "Well, we would not interfere with the possession of mere objects of common use, such as clothes, dwelling-places, furniture, books, food, or drink; but we would not leave productive property, by which fresh riches are created, in the hands of private owners; to this class of property belong tools, machinery, work-shops, manufactories, mines, gardens, fields, meadows, woods, and capital." "And to whom are such things to belong?" "To the community, the people, the State, to society at large." "So, by laying hands on the property of others, you would start with an injustice?" "That is unavoidable, but our scheme provides for all. Naturally, every one would be obliged to work for the community, and the State would pay the work in proportion to its merit, or according to the needs of the worker." "In proportion to the merit of the work! But, then, a sickly man with a large family might go hungry." "In proportion to the need of the worker! Why then the industrious would work for the lazy." But the main point of all is the difficulty of reckoning how much work each one is capable of producing, and what provision of grain, meal, meat, wool, cloth, and other things will be necessary to meet the wants of the whole nation. How many officials will you employ to distribute and give out the work —for, even under this new order of things, you can not hope to abolish the difference between work that is arduous and work that is light, that which is intellectual or merely manual, protected or dangerous, healthy or unhealthy? What number of overseers will you require to superintend

operations—for you will still have to cope with lazy as well as industrious men, you will still have skilful and unskilful, strong and weak to deal with? And, finally, how many people will it take to pay to every one what is due to him, having regard either to his merits or his needs; for, mark well, there will be then, just as there is now, plenty of envy, self-seeking, greed, quarrelsomeness, and discontent? All the concentrated wisdom of the world will never succeed in dividing the work so as to satisfy everybody; or in overlooking it in such a way as to ensure that all will contribute to the performance of it in the same degree; or in apportioning the pay to the satisfaction of every one. There will be but one employer, namely, the State; every one else will be the dependent and even the slave of the State. They will be obliged to do the work allotted them; to act in harmony with whatever superintendent happens to be set over them; to be content with the pay they receive; for to suppose that authority could be abolished in this State of the future without destroying law and order as well, would be equivalent to expecting that men could suddenly be transformed into angels. The nature, not only of things here below, but of man himself points to the fact that the order of the world is best maintained, and indeed can only be maintained on a system which is based on the right of private ownership.

II

History and religion teach us the same lesson. The history of nations shows that among all

peoples who have succeeded in building up and forming themselves into a well-ordered State the law of private property has always existed, and is protected and maintained down to the present day. It is unnecessary to offer proof of this, for it is not contested. Attempts have not been wanting on the part of men to form themselves into communities great or small, where no one was to possess anything, but everything was to be held in common for the good of all. What was the result? Experiments of this kind in Europe as well as in America have all failed lamentably. Their failure was not for want of money, or for lack of enthusiasm, or through inadequate support. Why did they not succeed? Because the principle in itself was rotten to the core.

What does religion say regarding the rights of property? It tells us that the first, the greatest, the universal inalienable right is God's, to whom as their creator all things belong, and that God has given the goods of this earth in the second place into the hands of men: "Rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth," or as it is said in the Psalms: "The heaven of heaven is the Lord's, but the earth He has given to the children of men." Yes, you retort, to men for common possession. Adam and Eve owned the whole world, they formed one family, there was no mention of division of goods. Yes, but how was it with their children? What is related of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel. "Abel was a shepherd, and Cain a husbandman. And it came to pass after many days that Cain offered of the

fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord." Of what land did he offer the fruits? Of *his own* land, for he was a husbandman. "Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock." *Of his* flock, he was a shepherd. Each offered what was his own. See how even in the earliest family that existed in the world, among the children of our first parents, this principle of private ownership made itself felt. When God gave the ten commandments He made the seventh: "Thou shalt not steal." Unless the system of property is recognized there can be no such thing as stealing. The tenth commandment is: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." Why shall you not covet them? Because they are his and not yours. In other words, they are his property and therefore inviolable.

But, you may urge, the first Christians held everything in common; they acted on that principle which alone is in harmony with the profession of the Christian religion. This is quite true. "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any of them say aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them." So says Holy Scripture. But what impelled them to live in this way, and thus make common cause? It was that they were so free from all attachment to earthly things, so full of brotherly love for each other. We are told further on: "For neither was their any one needy among them, for as many as were owners of lands and houses sold them, and brought the price of things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles; and dis-

tribution was made to every one according as he had need." This they did of their own free will; they were not obliged to do it, each one had the right to keep what belonged to him if he wanted to. Ananias sold his lands and brought a part of the price he received for it to the apostles, keeping the rest for himself, and representing to them that he was giving them the whole sum. He was terribly punished, and why? Because he acted dishonorably in trying to deceive the apostles, not because he kept what was his own. St. Peter says so specifically: "Whilst it remained did it not remain to thee? and after it was sold was it not in thy power?" Community of goods amongst the early Christians was voluntary, and could last only so long as they remained a small body animated by their first fervor. It very soon died away, but we have still with us the Religious Orders of the Catholic Church, where the practice of voluntary poverty and community of goods is in force to this day.

This is all very well, many among you may reply, we know that the principle of property is unassailable, and can not be contested; but all the same it would be a fine thing if the disparity between the rich and the poor were not so great, and if the good things of the world were divided a little more equally. One may certainly cherish such a desire; but it is a more beautiful thing still to submit with one's whole heart to the dispensation of divine Providence. If you are among those to whom little or nothing of this world's goods has been apportioned, accept your lot with resignation. Did not our divine Saviour and His

holy Mother live in poverty, and have not hundreds and thousands of souls since then made themselves poor for love of Him? Our Saviour called "Blessed" those who are poor in spirit; and humility, the foundation of all virtues, is closely allied to poverty. In the world to come there will be joys more real and more durable than anything this world has to offer. "This world passeth away." Those who have had very little here below will have all the greater claim to the delights of the world to come; and the possession of the riches of this life is often a source of real danger in attaining the reward of God's heavenly kingdom. St. Paul says: "For they that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snares of the devil, and into many hurtful and unprofitable desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the Faith." Let us learn to say, like the elder Tobias: "Fear not, we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." Amen.

SERMON XXXIII

On Injuring Our Neighbor's Goods

"Thou shalt not steal" (*Ex.* xx. 15).

INDIVIDUAL men have a perfectly lawful claim to the possession of the external goods of the earth. This is evident from the very constitution of things and from the nature of man himself; and it is the lesson taught by history and confirmed by the sanction of religion. In this instruction we will proceed to consider how we may commit sin by injuring our neighbor's goods and property. "What does the seventh commandment forbid?" "The seventh commandment forbids all unjust taking or keeping what belongs to another." This answer of the catechism comprises robbery, theft, cheating, usury, and any other unjust way of injuring our neighbor's property. We can divide such offenses into two classes:

I. Sins by which we injure the property of our neighbor for our own benefit; these include robbery, theft, cheating, and usury.

II. Sins by which we injure the property of our neighbor, but without intention of benefiting ourselves.

Let us consider briefly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these two classes of sins against the seventh commandment.

I

We sin by robbery when we take by force what

belongs to another, and by theft when we do so secretly by stealth. A close connection exists between robbery and theft, because both consist in taking what belongs to other people. But in spite of the similarity there is also a great difference. The robber takes what he wants, by the application, or at any rate the menace, of force, in the face of the owner, and in spite of his opposition and resistance. But the thief tries to accomplish his designs unperceived, secretly, and by stratagem. The King of Syria, Antiochus, went to Jerusalem and caused 1800 talents to be removed out of the Temple, in spite of and in opposition to the Jews who looked on in indignation at this outrage. The money was taken by force. A band of armed men gained access to the Temple, broke open the treasury, and secured the gold. Any one who offered them resistance would without doubt have been felled to the ground. The act was accomplished by violence. On the other hand, theft was the sin of Achan at the plundering of the city of Jericho, where the Jews had become possessed of rich booty. Achan admitted his sin in the following words: "I saw among the spoils a scarlet garment exceeding good, and two hundred sicles of silver, and a golden rule of fifty sicles, and I coveted them and I took them away and hid them in the ground in the midst of my tent, and the silver I covered with the earth that I dug up." He secured the prize when no one was looking, and hid it so as not to be found out. He took secretly what did not belong to him, which is theft. This is a very usual sin and there are many forms of it; children begin by pilfering

from the household provisions of food and drink; boys take the fruit in other people's gardens and orchards; later on money boxes are tampered with, and some of us have occasion to know what it is to have one's pocket picked.

Those people are equally to be looked upon as thieves who knowingly sell or conceal stolen goods although they may not themselves actually rob and steal, those also who fail to restore lost goods to the rightful owners although they either know who they are, or could easily discover them; those, again, who do not return what they have borrowed; and, finally, those who neglect to pay their debts although they have it in their power to do so.

Next comes the sin of cheating. Who are guilty of cheating? Those who impose upon their neighbors in their dealings, by giving them, for instance, false weight or measure, bad money, or damaged goods. There are such numberless ways of cheating that it would be impossible to enumerate them all; but whatever be the particular method or form adopted cheating is invariably characterized by the desire to get the better of our neighbor, either by deliberately misleading him, or by not pointing out some error into which he has already fallen, which is to our pecuniary profit, and to his disadvantage. Our neighbor takes it for granted he is receiving full measure, correct weight, or right change, but he is being tricked; he thinks he is getting good work, but he is deceived; he believes he is buying goods of a pure and reliable quality when in reality they are

adulterated, inferior, or bad. He is being imposed upon, or, in other words, cheated.

It is obvious that the business relations of trade and commerce, of buying and selling, open up an immense field for cheating. The Old Testament says: "A deceitful balance is an abomination before the Lord." A cheat will go to any lengths, so long as he is not afraid of detection. He will adulterate the very bread of the poor, and will not even stick at selling them medicines of inferior quality.

Usury is a further sin against the seventh commandment. Usury is asking unlawful interest for money lent, or in general taking advantage of our neighbor's necessity or ignorance. Rich and well-to-do people do not often fall into the hands of usurers. It is the poor man, who must have money and can not get it, who becomes their prey, and is driven by his need and distress to pay excessive interest, or to sell and buy at an unfair price. He who knows the need of his neighbor and turns it to profit to enrich himself is a usurer. In the old days a usurer was refused Christian burial, for usury is not only a sin, it is an oppression of the poor crying to heaven for vengeance. There is a legend told of St. Francis of Paula that on one occasion the king led him to the treasure chamber, and there showed him piles of heaped-up gold. The saint took a handful of gold pieces and pressed them together and behold blood flowed from them. "See," said he to the king, "this gold has been paid for with the blood of your subjects." Riches have often been acquired unjustly, and they may be tainted with the sweat,

the tears, and even the blood of the poor and wretched victims of the rich man's greed.

All the sins which we have mentioned are committed with the object of drawing personal advantage from them. The robber and the thief wish to possess the stolen goods, the cheat and the usurer hope to enrich themselves by their sin. But there are other sins against the seventh commandment from which this motive is absent.

II

We sin against the seventh commandment when, out of ill will or culpable negligence, we injure our neighbor's property, or when we contribute by our advice or by our actions to the breaking of this commandment.

Those sins which come under the head of injuries to property are undertaken from very various motives; sometimes out of envy, hatred, or ill will, as is generally the case when a man's house, or hay, or stable is set on fire; sometimes, no doubt, from mere wildness and thoughtlessness —as by boys, for instance, who will run through cornfields and meadowlands, or play in the long grass, or break window panes. Or it may be that the injury done to others is the result of that carelessness and inattention which so often causes servants to damage the china, glass, or furniture of their masters, and which has sometimes even cost a man the loss of valuable live-stock. Again, those who by their advice and action facilitate offenses against the property of their neighbor, those who point out to others opportunities for cheating and stealing, and who show the way to

robbery, theft, and usury; in a word, all those through whose fault the property of our neighbor is injured, whether it be to their own profit or not, are also guilty of sin.

To this instruction on the sins which injure the property of our neighbor I would like to add a two-fold warning.

A warning to parents. It is wrong for them to look on with indifference if they notice their children, or those under their charge, whether in the house, the kitchen, the shop, or the workroom, taking without permission trifles of food, or money, or articles of any kind, of however little value, which do not belong to them. Still less ought they to be pleased if a child shows skill in the appropriation of such things, for, however little value they may have in themselves, we know that small beginnings often make great endings. If children begin by stealing from their own parents, later on they will go on to steal from other people. If when they are children they can not keep their fingers off pennies they will not always be able to keep them off dollars. Keep your money well locked up for fear you may be educating thieves.

To those in particular who even in early youth are obliged to find occupation and live as servants or teachers or assistants in the houses of strangers, and who, though poor themselves, are surrounded with abundance and superfluity; those, again, who have often even the charge of goods of which no account is asked and which it would be easy to appropriate and conceal, to such as

these I cry: Remember the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor his house, nor his field, nor anything that is his." Thou shalt not even covet, much less steal. Why should you want to steal? What use will you make of the stolen goods? How will you replace them? Even the world, which forgives almost anything, will not allow an attack on its own property. And the irreligious men only laugh; it is considered nothing for a young man to stay away from church, to work on Sundays and holy-days; such things are perhaps even expected of him; if he eats meat on Friday plenty of others set him the example; he finds many sympathizers if he takes away his neighbor's character by reckless statements; no one interferes if he talks indecencies. But, so soon as he stretches out his hand to what belongs to another they cry out "Thief, robber, scoundrel," and then there only remains an appeal to the police, a court of justice, and prison. All the other commandments may be violated, but the seventh must remain sacred. This may sound unreasonable, but it is true.

Let us, therefore, be on our guard against any tampering with our neighbor's goods. Let us do this out of love for God who commands it, and from love of our neighbor, which will not let us injure him. Let us do it for our own sake, too, for the world as it is constituted to-day will excuse and forgive anything, except the least encroachment on our neighbor's property. Let us be on our guard against any feeling of covetous-

ness, no matter how easy it might be to gratify it, suppressing even the desire to be rich in this world. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his."

To all those who are engaged in business and trade, I say: Be on your guard against making dishonest profits. But, you reply, competition is so keen one must make an income; we want to have something to leave our children. No doubt it is a man's duty to further his temporal interests, but not by unjust means, and not as though he alone had care of them. The Providence of God guards them with you: "Your Father knows that you have need of all these things." Nor must we devote ourselves to them, as though we had nothing else to think of: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice." First, and what comes next: "And all other things will be added unto you." To those, therefore, who give the first place to the kingdom of God and to the supernatural graces and blessings all other things will be added. Money and possessions are not neutral things. They are capable of being transformed into pure gold—such a love of God as makes men willing to forsake all for His sake; or into silver—the love of our fellow-creatures, which will lead us to spend them for the benefit of others; or into good iron—that lawful love of self which will make us use them well to satisfy our own just needs and requirements. But they will turn to dirt and pollute the soul if we allow the desire for unjust gain to take hold of us; and

should we by unlawful means actually become possessed of the goods of this world and retain them they will be a fire which, though powerless to affect the body, will eat its way and burn into our very heart and soul. Amen.

SERMON XXXIV

On Making Restitution

"Thou shalt not steal" (*Ex.* xx. 15).

IN OUR last instruction we examined one by one the sins of robbery, theft, cheating, usury, and all other unjust means by which, whether out of malice, or merely through carelessness, we injure our neighbor's property.

It still remains for us to consider a duty which almost invariably arises from any such offense, namely, that of making reparation or restitution. We will divide our subject into two heads, considering, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

I. The duty of making restitution.
II. The manner of making restitution.

I

The catechism asks: "Are we bound to restore ill-gotten goods?" "We are bound to restore ill-gotten goods or the value of them as far as we are able; otherwise we can not be forgiven." "Are we obliged to repair the damage we have unjustly caused?" "We are bound to repair the damage we have unjustly caused." Those sins by which God only is offended can be forgiven by hearty contrition and sincere confession followed by absolution. But offenses which injure our neighbor to any serious degree require that due restitution or at least compensation be made; or if this is not possible there must be the firm pur-

pose to make it as soon as possible. The principle of making restitution or giving compensation is part of the civil law in addition to being a law of the Church, and is enjoined by the Old, as well as the New, Testament. Some instances in Holy Scripture show this clearly.

Tobias, being old and blind, his wife Anna supported him by the work of her hands. One day she received a young kid and brought it home with her, her husband knowing nothing of it. Hearing the animal bleating he said: "Take heed lest perhaps it be stolen; restore it to its owners." As soon as he was aware that by any possibility he might be in possession of what belonged to another he ordered restitution to be made.

A God-fearing man came to a poor widow asking payment of a debt due to him and, as she was unable to give him the money, he demanded her two sons as his slaves. In her trouble the woman turned to the Prophet Eliseus, and the holy man worked a miracle on her behalf, by which the vessels which at his command she had borrowed became filled with oil. The oil was the rightful property of the widow, who was thus suddenly raised from great poverty to considerable wealth. But what did the Prophet say to her: "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy creditor, and thou and thy sons live of the rest" (4 *Kings* iv. 7). So the payment of creditors comes first.

The New Testament gives us the beautiful example of Zaccheus, a rich publican. He received our Saviour into his house with joy, and sorrowing for all the sins of his life he made a generous resolution: "Behold the half of my goods I give

to the poor." It was a fine thing for a rich man to give half of all he possessed to the poor, but our Saviour spoke no word of praise. Finally Zaccheus made this important addition to his statement: "And if I have wronged any man of anything I restore him four fold." Neither contrition nor almsgiving were of any avail unless he also made restitution where it was due. After these words our Saviour said: "This day is salvation come to this house."

It is, therefore, beyond doubt, that according to all laws, human or divine, any one who has injured the property of his neighbor is bound to make restitution. If he has this in his power and neglects to do it let him confess his sin as often as he likes he will not be forgiven by God, no matter how great his contrition may be and despite all the absolutions which a confessor has power to pronounce over him. Can it be genuine contrition that makes a thief sorry for his theft, but allows him to enjoy the fruit of it? A confessor has no power to give a penitent more than his due, more than he really deserves.

For those to whom it is impossible to make restitution, but who are resolved to do so as soon as they are able, the obligation is removed until such time as they find themselves in a position to carry out their intention.

II

As regards the way in which restitution or compensation is to be made, we have to consider:

1. Who it is that is bound to make restitution or compensation. It is he who is in possession of

the stolen goods, or of their value. But if he does not do it the obligation devolves on those who by counsel or action were accessory to the sin, or who did not hinder it although it was in their power and their duty required them to so hinder it.

We must distinguish between restitution and compensation, for they are two quite different things. If the object of which we have deprived our neighbor is still forthcoming we are bound to restore it to him; this is making restitution. But if the stolen object is no longer in our possession we must make good any loss our neighbor has suffered. This is giving him compensation.

The duty of making restitution, therefore, devolves primarily on him who is in possession of the stolen goods. By all means, you will say to me, thieves, robbers, and all who knowingly receive stolen goods are obliged to restore them; any one can see that, no one will contest it. But how would the matter stand if in good faith some one were to buy and pay for a stolen article at third or fourth hand; would he be bound to restore it as soon as the rightful owner appeared? He would, indeed, and the reason is very simple, and, as the French say "*saute aux yeux.*" The bond of possession is an invisible link attaching each separate object to its owner, so that whether a thing be stolen, robbed, or embezzled, sold, exchanged, or given away by the thief, it still remains the property of its master, and must in the end be restored to his keeping.

The duty of making restitution rests in the first place on those who have really done the injury.

This is as clear as daylight. If they act as they ought to do then those who were accessory to the sin go free.

It sometimes happens that the people really responsible for the injury done to the property of a neighbor are not prepared, or are not able to make restitution. Is it, then, the owner who should suffer the loss? The chief actors in the sin have probably been helped by others who, even if they derived no profit from the harm done to their neighbor, still were guilty of taking part in the plan to injure him. If the actual doers of the deed do not make the necessary restitution, then those who were accessory to it must do so. If there is only one he must bear the whole brunt, if there are several, then as many as are willing and able must face the consequences.

But supposing neither the actual doer of the action, nor those who participated in it, are able and willing to make compensation, then the obligation devolves on those who might have prevented the sin, but who neglected to do so, although it was their special duty.

The whole scale of liability can be explained by one example.

A farmer at the time of the harvest ordered his two servants to harness the horses at midnight and follow him. They drove to their neighbor's field and, taking two heavy loads of corn hurried back and stored them secretly in their master's granaries. Now who was here the guilty party? The farmer. He it is who is bound to make restitution. But he does not do it; then who must bear the loss? The two servants, each one half. The

first says, "I will not"; then it falls to the lot of the second to make good the whole. But he replied, "I can not." Now, as the heavily-laden wagon drove away from the field the steward of the property passed along, at a little distance. He could have stopped it, but he made no attempt to do so; the thief was his own cousin, and he looked steadily in another direction. He was specially bound to prevent the theft, because he was officially guardian of the property. It was his business to look after it. Therefore, as both the doer of the action and those who participated in it fail to make the necessary restitution, the duty falls on the steward.

2. To whom is restitution of the ill-gotten goods to be made? To the owner or to his heirs; but if this be not possible then they must be given to the poor, or appropriated to some religious purpose. Under no circumstances must it remain in the possession of those who procured it unlawfully, who would thus become enriched by their sin. Therefore, if there is no possibility of finding the lawful owner, or his heirs, the property unlawfully acquired must be utilized as alms for the poor, to support hospitals and orphanages, to build churches for poor parishes, or for some similar purpose.

3. What must they do who can not immediately make restitution? They must have the sincere intention of doing so as soon as they can, and in the meantime they must employ all possible means to be in such a position as soon as possible. He who can never hope to make good the injury he has done his neighbor must at least cultivate the

wish and the will to do so, and must pray for him whom he has injured.

Nothing, dearly beloved brethren, is more calculated to restrain a Christian from ever injuring his neighbor's property than the thought pure and simple: "I shall be obliged to restore it, to make restitution." To what purpose shall a man take under pain of sin, and at great risk of disgrace, what he can by no means be allowed to keep? Why acquire at the price of deceit and treachery what must afterward be restored, or inflict an injury which finally must be borne by one's self? Surely, if this is realized, our neighbor's goods would be safe from our hands. But men forget it and later on urge a thousand reasons for not complying with the law of making restitution. But their objections are worthless. The person you have robbed may be rich and not in need of that which you have taken from him; nevertheless, you are quite as strictly forbidden to steal from the rich as from the poor. He may not even be aware of his loss, but you are aware that you have injured him; he may now be long dead, but his heirs are still alive; perhaps he lives a long way off, still a money order will travel round the world. You say you do not know who he is; perhaps you have never even troubled to make inquiries. "The thing that I stole was perishable, one could not keep it, and it has long since been consumed." Yes, but it can be valued according to its worth. Return the value of it. "Oh, one can hardly set a value upon such trifles!" Remember "many a mickle makes a muckle." Many a large fortune has been built

up out of tiny pilferings and petty thefts carried on from day to day, and from hour to hour.

"Well," you say, finally, "I would gladly make restitution if I were able, but I have nothing to make it with." Would it not be possible by avoiding unnecessary expenditure to manage to make good a part if not the whole of the harm you have done? "How can I tell if I shall live long enough to pay off the whole debt?" Well, do what you can as long as you live. "But if I pay the whole I shall be reduced to poverty. What right have you to enjoy riches at the expense of your neighbor? "For myself I would not care, but I can not reconcile myself to robbing my children." And do you intend to leave to your children what does not belong to you? "Ill-gotten gains never prosper," and "honesty is invariably the best policy." "But if I come forward to make restitution I shall lose my good name." What right have you to a good name? Moreover, restitution can be made without jeopardizing one's reputation in any way. "How? I know no way." Then ask your confessor. "I have been sorry for my sins and confessed them and received absolution." Did your confessor then release you from the obligation of making restitution? "No, he said nothing at all." Well, he thought it self-evident. "He reminded me of the obligation and I promised to fulfil it." Very well, why have you not done so? Why do you not do so now?

Not one of the arguments you have used contains a spark of force or reality, and with a little thought they can all be refuted in a few words. Nothing remains for us, dearly beloved brethren,

but to close our instruction with a good resolution. Lord God, creator and possessor of all things, I will be content with that portion of this world's goods which Thy Providence has allotted me, and never will I stretch out my hand to take unlawfully what does not belong to me, nor raise my eyes to covet the possessions of others. I will strive to keep my heart detached even from what is my own, using all things in moderation for Thy honor and for assisting others in their needs! So may even the mere dust and dross of the earth help us to earn the imperishable good of eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXXV

On Lying and Hypocrisy

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (*Ex.* xx. 16).

The fifth commandment protects the bodily and spiritual life of our neighbor, and the seventh commandment defends his property. But he has yet another life, and possessions of a different kind to be safeguarded, namely, his honor and his good name. These interests are protected by the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." If we look at the literal meaning of these words we see that they are primarily directed against false evidence, which is stating what is not true in a court of justice. Holy Scripture relates how two men bore false witness against Naboth, swearing that he had blasphemed God and the king. As a result of their wickedness Naboth forfeited his good name; moreover, he paid the penalty of his life, for he was stoned to death and all his possessions were lost to his heirs forever, and appropriated by the king. Such witnesses are with justice called devils by Holy Scripture. They sinned against the eighth commandment and that in many different ways. First, the whole of their testimony was a lie, for what they said was untrue; they calumniated their neighbor and injured his reputation, his possessions, his life; and as their evidence was given before a legal tribunal

it is probable they attested it on oath, thereby being guilty of the crime of perjury.

We have already explained fully in our instructions on the second commandment all that concerns false evidence given on oath. But there still remain a number of other offenses forbidden by the eighth commandment, which for our purpose we will divide into two classes: in the first class are those against truth; in the second class those against our neighbor's character.

The sins against truth are:

I. Lies.
II. Hypocrisy.

For to-day we will confine ourselves to these two, considering them briefly with the help of the Holy Spirit.

I

What is meant by a lie? By a lie is meant knowingly and deliberately to say what is not true. The first thing the word "lie" brings to our mind is untruth; a lie involves saying what is not true. But saying what is not true does not, under all circumstances, make a man a liar, because he may believe that what he says *is* true. To constitute a lie there must be, as well as the want of truth, the further element of *knowledge,* by which we say *knowingly* what is untrue. Now there are a number of fables, allegories, parables, legends, sayings, that have passed from mouth to mouth, that have been told and retold, printed and read, and which yet never happened at all in the way they are related. Are they all lies? Certainly

not. The third constituent of a lie is wanting to them, namely, the intention to deceive and to lead others into error. Such stories are told, not in order to be believed, but only to make a serious truth more acceptable and easier to understand by dressing it in a pleasing garb. Three things, therefore, conjointly make up a lie: the spoken untruth, the knowledge that it is untrue, the intention to deceive and lead others into error. Where these three things exist we have a lie; where one of them is missing there is no lie.

Lies take many different shapes and forms, and in different cases assume various complexions, according to the motive that prompts them. Some lies are malicious, their purpose being to injure another person, such were those told by the false witnesses against Naboth, when they testified to his having blasphemed God and the king. Then there are the lies men make use of to help one another and those which they have recourse to to extricate themselves from a difficulty. Examples of these are given by Giezi, the servant of the prophet Eliseus, who, in order to procure a talent of silver and two changes of garment for two young men, sons of a prophet, followed Naaman secretly, pretending that his master had sent him. He got what he wanted and kept it for himself. Then when questioned by his master he fell back upon a lie to save himself, declaring, in answer to Eliseus: "Thy servant went no whither." Even lies told in fun, though no doubt they are to be judged the most leniently of all, may sometimes be sins, and are therefore to be avoided.

As regards the gravity of this sin we must bear in mind that it is forbidden to tell a lie either for our own or for another's benefit, even in jest or in need. Never, never, under any circumstances. What holds good for grown-up people applies especially to children, for whom a lie is often the beginning, the first step in a long career of sin. What! Is a lie invariably a grievous sin? In many cases it is not; but we are bound to avoid the lesser sins, and lying always leads to worse things and is often instrumental in concealing and denying, defending and excusing greater evils. It is a wide mantle which shelters under its folds every kind of wrong-doing, affording it harbor and protection. Not without reason does Holy Scripture say: "He that speaketh lies shall perish."

By telling a lie we make ourselves the very antithesis to Him who can not deceive, who is the very truth: "All His ways are judgments . . . He is just and right." How distasteful to Him must all forms of deceit be! "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

If we wish to avoid the beginnings of sin and, keeping far from the spirit of evil, to preserve the image of God in our souls, if we desire the respect of our fellow-men, then we must, with our whole heart, love truth and detest lying.

II

The second offense against the eighth commandment is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is to pretend to be better or more pious than we are in order thereby to deceive others. Truth is wounded even more

deeply by hypocrisy than by lying. A lie attacks it by means of words, be they spoken, written, or printed; but hypocrisy works by acts and deeds, by general demeanor, by what it does not do, sometimes even by tears and works of penance. Our Saviour Himself said: "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works that I do." Ugly as hypocrisy looks when viewed simply in the light of truth it assumes a still more repulsive character when we consider that it uses the cloak of virtue, piety, faith, and justice to spread abroad evil, to conceal its immorality and accomplish its wicked designs. "Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." A wolf is a cruel, bloodthirsty, dangerous animal which to see is to fear and flee from. But should he approach the fold in the guise of the gentle, patient, harmless sheep, what havoc he may have power to work!

Holy Scripture furnishes us with a finished picture of a hypocrite in Herod. The wise men confidently asked him: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the east and are come to adore Him?" Herod was frightened; thoughts of murder rose up in his soul, but he concealed his fiendish plans: "Go and inquire diligently after the child, and when you have found Him bring me word again, that I may also come and adore Him." Here is hypocrisy of the most repulsive description. Herod assumed the desire to adore the child, when in reality he was longing to destroy Him. The Pharisees also were hypocrites. They posed be-

fore men as law-abiding, benevolent, and just, zealous for the honor of God; but inwardly their hearts were full of envy, jealousy, and hatred toward Jesus Christ. Our Lord compared them to whited sepulchers. The exterior of a sepulcher is decorated with flowers and wreaths, and inscriptions traced on marble or stone of dazzling whiteness. But what of the interior? Corruption, foulness, worms, too terrible to look upon; the very thought of which fills one with horror.

Hypocrisy is not only hideous in itself, it is very mischievous in its results and not infrequently brings about the success of the wicked plans formed by him who practises it. Further, it gives the impious cause to sneer at virtue, and to excuse and defend their evil courses by saying that all goodness is hypocritical. It is often from fear of being called hypocrites that lukewarm or negligent Christians refuse to be roused out of their carelessness and indifference; and finally hypocrisy sometimes succeeds in deceiving simple and earnest Christians, making a cat's-paw of them to advance its own bad cause.

Let us be on our guard against lies, but doubly so against hypocrisy, and trebly so against the hypocrite himself. "He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his soul." Amen.

SERMON XXXVI

On Detraction

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (*Ex.* xx. 16).

We have divided the sins against the eighth commandment into two classes, those against truth, and those against the reputation of our neighbor. The sins against truth, which are lying and hypocrisy, we considered in detail last Sunday.

We now come to those numerous sins by which the reputation of our neighbor is affected. The catechism divides them into three groups: detraction, calumny, slander, and tale-bearing. There is a family likeness between these three; they all are sins of speech and are for the most part committed in the absence of him against whom they are directed.

For our purpose, the difference between them is of greater importance than their points of similarity. Let us, therefore, with the help of the Holy Spirit, try to realize as far as we can:

I. The odiousness of detraction.
II. The difficulty of repairing it.

I

How may we sin by detraction? We sin by detraction when we reveal the faults of others without necessity. Mark well the characteristics of this fault.

(a) The detractor makes known the faults of his *neighbor*. To publish one's own misdeeds would be in many cases to forfeit one's good name. It would be as though one deliberately damaged and threw away one's own property.

(b) The detractor makes known the *faults* of his neighbor. In making known the good our neighbor does, and the qualities he possesses which are not evil, we neither injure his reputation nor commit the sin of detraction.

(c) The detractor *makes known* the faults of his neighbor; that is to say, he drags to light the wrong really done by another, but which is either not known at all, or only in part, and by talking about brings it well under the notice of what is called the public, in other words, before the minds of other people.

(d) Finally, detraction reveals the faults of others *without necessity*—that is, without reasonable and sufficient cause. There are circumstances, no doubt, under which not only is it no sin to reveal the faults of another, but where one is bound to do so in order that harm may be averted and wrong corrected, punished, and rectified. For instance, it is no sin for children, pupils, and subordinates of one kind and another to report to parents, teachers, or superiors the wrong-doing of their brothers and sisters, their school-fellows, their comrades when the matter is really serious; under some circumstances it is their duty to do so, that the evil may be put an end to. Even Joseph, the son of Jacob, denounced his brethren to his father when they had been guilty of a most wicked crime. Another case where it is allowed

and is even necessary to make known the faults of others, is when a serious injury, or great evil can only be averted, and ourselves, or our family, or society at large, or the Church, or the State can only be protected by so doing.

Detraction, therefore, consists in revealing without necessity a fault which our neighbor really and truly has committed, but which is not known to others. This is obviously sinful, for by acting thus our neighbor's good reputation suffers, is lessened, wounded, and destroyed. "A good name is better than great riches." It is a sin, and when it is a question of serious faults it is a grievous sin to make them known without necessity.

And now, dearly beloved brethren, will you answer me one question? Are there not many among us who would refuse on any pretext whatsoever, to take the smallest trifle that belonged to another? Yes; there are many such, thank God for it. But how many, even among good Christians, have the least compunction in publishing abroad, at the top of their voices, the faults, even the serious misdeeds of their neighbor, talking them over with any one that will listen. There are few, very few, I fear; perhaps hardly any at all. More rapidly than fire spreads from house to house, at a greater speed than a flooded river overwhelms towns and villages, quicker almost than a storm sweeps over mountains and valleys, detraction flies from mouth to mouth, from house to house, through town and village, over hill and dale. Oh, what numbers of sins are committed against the reputation of our neighbor which we

hardly regard as sins at all, which are never repented of, or confessed, and for which reparation is never made!

How foolish and worthless are the excuses urged by detractors in defence of their sin:

"I have said no more than the truth, and one is entitled to speak the truth!" We must never tell lies, certainly, but are we to say everything that is true, even to the point of wounding and damaging our neighbor's reputation? Certainly not. No matter how greatly or how often our neighbor may have erred, or how true and inexcusable his mistakes may be, as long as they remain unknown he still possesses his credit and his good name. This is a valuable and a sacred possession, which you have no right to touch. Many of us feel that we would rather part with all we have than lose our good name; that we would rather die than live without honor. It is no small matter to wound and destroy this treasure, and it can not be done without incurring guilt. How would you feel if some one were to rake up your worst, your oldest, and most secret misdeeds, perhaps long forgotten by you, and publish them to the world? Would such a thing not wound and grieve you, and cut you to the quick? What you would not wish done to yourself you must not do to another.

It is true, you admit, that I have often spread the knowledge of my neighbor's faults, but I have done so without any evil intention, for something to talk about, for fun. And is that quite true? Was it not out of secret envy, or from feelings of dislike or hatred or revenge? To say it was

only for purposes of conversation is no excuse. If you were to break the windows of your next-door neighbor would it excuse you to say you only did it for fun, or to make a subject for conversation? The reputation of any man is a thousand times more precious than a few panes of glass, which can be replaced by the nearest glazier. But can a good name, once lost, ever be restored? Or can that which is a source of shame and tears and bitter heartache to our neighbor be a lawful subject of amusement and a theme of conversation for us?

Another plea that people put forward is this: Every one does it without thinking anything of it! Unhappily it is but too true that thousands and tens of thousands of tongues are engaged on the work of detraction without giving it a second thought. But does that excuse one single word of detraction in particular? What would a judge say to a thief who when accused urged in his own defence that there were many other thieves? He would probably answer, all the more reason for hunting them down, and for trying, sentencing, and punishing them when we can catch them. It is very desirable that those who have been found out should not escape.

Finally, it is said: It is true I have spoken of an otherwise unknown misdeed of my neighbor, but only privately, to very few, to my greatest friend, my confidant. But by revealing it even only to one person you destroy the good opinion which that person had up to then held of him of whom you spoke. Moreover, your special friends and confidants will also have theirs, to whom,

under promise of the strictest secrecy, they will relate what they have heard. In this way you will soon discover that what you made known, as you thought so privately, has become a matter of common talk. The only secret they can be thoroughly counted upon to keep is the secret they do not know.

II

A special difficulty in connection with the sin of detraction is the obligation, on the one hand, of making reparation for what we have said, and the practical impossibility, on the other hand, of ever really doing so. For how can we set about repairing the damage we have done to the reputation of another? Are we to say, "What I asserted was not true"? No, we must not do that, for it *was* true. Are, then, the wounds which we have inflicted to be left to bleed on, without remedy of any kind, without either bandage or plaster? Oh, no! It is obvious that some obligation devolves on him who commits detraction. In such cases we should try to excuse our neighbor, and to restore his good name by every lawful means in our power.

Here we have a clear indication of how to act when we have injured our neighbor by detraction. We must try as far as we can to excuse the faults which we have made known in him, and, in point of fact, dearly beloved brethren, there is scarcely any one so bad that there is not something to suggest in palliation of the wrong he has done. We can always put forward the plea either of youth or inexperience; or we can urge that he acted

under great provocation, in anger, or passion, or that he was suffering from the effects of wine; that apart from this one slip he is a good man. Or we can try to minimize the sin itself, saying that it happened only once and no harm was meant, that the matter has been exaggerated and has never been clearly proved, or that it is the first time anything of the kind occurred. The circumstances that conduced to the fault may be explained, such as, for instance, a bad upbringing, evil companions by whom he was led away, and the sorrow afterward ought to be dwelt upon, as well as the punishment that followed the fault, the way it was atoned for, the improvement it brought about, and the fact that it never occurred again.

One must do all one can to cover up the faults of one's neighbor, and one or other of these excuses will surely serve and tell in his favor. Nevertheless, it is patent that such excuses in most cases are weak and have little bearing on the subject. The injury is deep and painful, the remedy is a mere surface one; every touch renews the wound and causes it to bleed afresh. Indeed, if our excuses are not handled with great skill and dexterity they but help to aggravate the mischief and increase and deepen the soreness we have caused.

Oh, what a sharp sword, what a dangerous instrument is the human tongue! It works injury to him who speaks the detraction, causing him to commit sin; it harms the soul of the listener, for to listen to detraction willingly, encouraging and enjoying it, is a sin; thirdly, the honor and often

the heart of him against whom we speak is wounded. The apostle St. James says, "the tongue is full of deadly poison." What better resolution can we make than to try with the grace of God to keep a guard over every word our tongue utters, and dedicate it to the honor and glory of God, the edification and defence of our neighbor, and to the practice of the virtue of silence. Thus we should be saved from much sin, and should transform a special instrument of evil and death into a means of giving honor and glory to God. Amen.

SERMON XXXVII

On Calumny

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (*Ex.* xx. 16).

We sin against the honor and good name of our neighbor principally by detraction, calumny, and slander. We have considered detraction in all its bearings; we will now pass on to calumny. How do we sin by calumny? By imputing faults to our neighbor which he has not got, or by exaggerating his real faults. With the help of the Holy Spirit we will try to explain to you how the tongue of a calumniator does a threefold injury:

I. To the person calumniated.
II. To those who listen to the calumny.
III. To the calumniator himself.

I

It is clear and evident from the definition of it which we have given that a calumny injures him against whom it is uttered, for it imputes to him faults that he has not committed and perhaps never dreamed of, and it magnifies his actual faults. What was trifling is made to appear of great importance; an evil motive is supplied for quite unintentional acts; what happened once is represented as being of frequent or even habitual occurrence. Such inaccuracy may harm another greatly. It may harm him by injuring the

good reputation he had enjoyed till a venomous tongue lowered him in the eyes of others; it may rob him of that respect which plays so large a part in making our relations with our fellowmen pleasant and agreeable, and which is more precious than gold or silver or anything in the world. "Better death than dishonor." To cast a slur on the honor of a man is often to lay the foundation of his failure in life, by barring his way to desirable appointments and dignities. It is no small matter to injure any one's good name; honor is sensitive and easily wounded; it is like the human eye to which a grain of sand or a little speck of dust can cause almost unendurable suffering. We must bear in mind that there are circumstances which in themselves greatly aggravate the gravity of the sin of calumny, because this sin bears some proportion to the magnitude of the offense falsely imputed, and to the authority and weight of the person who makes the imputation. The words of a man of position who is respected and looked up to on all sides will carry conviction much more readily than those of an irresponsible gossip. Moreover, the character of the person falsely accused enters into it also. It is a greater sin to speak calumny against a priest, a woman of irreproachable reputation, an innocent young girl, a trusted official, a respectable, honest man of business than against one who has already forfeited the good opinion of his fellows. Finally, the sin of calumny is greater the larger the number of people among whom it is circulated. It is possible to leap over a brook of running water, but when it comes to surmount-

ing a roaring torrent one is likely to be swamped in the attempt. Calumny becomes particularly loathsome and venomous when it assumes the guise of praise or pity. So and so has splendid brains, is honorable in business, he is full of good qualities—what a pity it is that in private he gives way to drink! Such and such a girl is clever, industrious, attractive, but, it pains me to say it on account of her excellent parents, she has got a very vague idea of morality! Oh, the bitterness and shame of receiving praise and pity from the tongue that is aiming a death blow at our reputation! It is beyond doubt that calumny is often responsible for injuring men gravely in their honor, in their fortune and position in society, and not infrequently puts difficulties in the way of their advancement in life.

II

A calumny injures those who listen to it, not in every case, it is true, but very often. It may easily happen that among the number who hear it there is one on whom rests a special duty and obligation to contradict it; but he remains silent and commits a sin. Or another perhaps rejoices in his heart at what is said, and so offends against brotherly love and charity; a third encourages the calumny, laughs at it, confirms it, eagerly asking for more details; then others present take it up, and it flies from ear to ear, from mouth to mouth, and all concerned commit sin. Just consider also how common an evil is the sin of calumny. It attacks prince and people, master and man, superior and subordinate, equals and

inferiors, married and single, clergy and laity, cloistered and uncloistered, living and dead. And each calumny furnishes to those who listen to it, who laugh and are pleased at it, and help to spread it, a whole series of fresh opportunities for committing sin.

Yes, you say, you are quite right. But one can hardly avoid hearing such things now and then, because of their very frequency. One can not stop one's ears. I can put into a very few words exactly what the attitude toward calumny ought to be, or rather what it ought *not* to be. One must neither listen to it, nor show pleasure in it, nor believe it, nor spread it.

Do not listen to it. "Hedge in your ears with thorns; hear not a wicked tongue." There are people who are famous for their backbiting, slanderous tongues. Do not listen to them. Avoid their society.

Do not show pleasure in it. If any one calumniates another in your presence, so far from appearing pleased try to show by the seriousness of your demeanor, looks, and manner that you are displeased and greatly dislike such a way of proceeding. "The north wind driveth away rain as doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue." Such are the words of Holy Scripture.

Do not believe it. Do not attach credit to the words of him who injures his neighbor by calumny. True charity refuses to believe the ill that is spoken of another, until there is no longer any possibility of closing one's eyes to it.

Do not spread it abroad. Whether the evil spoken of your neighbor be true or untrue,

whether you believe it or whether you do not, never, under any circumstances, repeat it. Holy Scripture says: "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor? Let it die within thee." Yes, let it be dead and buried, never again to live in your memory, much less come to life on your tongue. There are but too many people ready not only to originate calumny and detraction, but also to repeat what they hear from others in that way.

III

Although a calumny injures the person calumniated and those who listen to it it harms no one more than the person who utters it, for it is a great sin.

The very motive which induces a man to calumniate his neighbor is sinful. St. Thomas calls calumny the daughter of envy, meaning that it springs from an envious heart. This is often the literal truth, and where it is not the case, desire for revenge, hatred, love of making mischief are at the bottom of it. It is sinful from its very origin.

Once a calumny takes shape and is formulated in words which escape the tongue, it is an offense against a fellow-creature, and in many cases a grave sin. Can a man do himself greater harm than by the commission of sin?

But a calumny can be repented of and confessed, and absolved as well as any other sin. Yes, it can, but it is a matter of greater difficulty than in other cases. Why should there be greater difficulty? Well, just as the thief who has stolen what does not belong to him is under an obliga-

tion to make restitution, so he who has attacked his neighbor's good name, injuring and wounding it, is also bound to restore it. This is not a simple matter, it is often very, very difficult. Why should it be so difficult? Because in order to put things right the calumniator must take back what he has said untruly against his neighbor; in other words, he must acknowledge himself to be a malicious liar and an unscrupulous man. Is that an easy thing to do? Very few can rise to it, and yet it is obligatory. In the sixteenth century a certain nobleman basely and grossly libeled a lady of distinction. He sought out a very respected and learned confessor and confessed his sin. As soon as the confessor heard mention of the sin of calumny he rose up and dismissed the penitent with the words: "There is no more to be done for you; you are lost." The sinner went to another confessor and complained very much of the curt treatment he had received. This time he met with encouragement and was advised once more to confess his sin. After his confession the priest, as was his duty, reminded him that he must recall the calumny and make good the harm he had done. But the penitent was up in arms at once: "I!—go back upon what I said! I acknowledge myself publicly as a liar! Never, never!" The priest pointed out to him that unless he did so he could not obtain absolution, but all in vain; so for the second time the confessor rose up and said: "You are lost. Your first confessor was cleverer than I; he saw in advance that it would be all of no avail. Go, you are lost." In all the number of calumnies we hear,

how seldom we know of one being recalled. But even when the penitent is willing to withdraw the calumny he can not always tell the full extent of the harm he has done; he does not know how far his words have been believed, nor how many times they have been repeated. He has no means of judging of the effect of his withdrawal, nor how much credence it has obtained. Unfortunately, men are inclined to believe evil more readily than good.

It is also possible that what we have said to injure our neighbor's good name may have done him harm in other ways as well, causing him indirectly to suffer loss of business, or advancement of fortune, for instance. Who can gauge this? Yet the injunction to withdraw the calumny uttered against our neighbor and repair all the injury we have done him holds good. Nevertheless, it is a matter of great difficulty.

St. Bonaventure tells us that speech was given to man that he might praise God, edify his neighbor, and accuse himself. In uttering a calumny a man uses his tongue not to praise God, but to offend Him; not to edify his neighbor, but to injure him; not in self-accusation, but in self-destruction. Let us be on our guard against it. "Take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue and fall in the sight of thy enemies who lie in wait for thee, and thy fall be incurable unto death." "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (*James* iii. 2). Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII

On Tale-bearing, Injurious Words, False Suspicions, and Rash Judgments

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (*Ex.* xx. 16).

THE first group of sins against the honor of our neighbor includes detraction, calumny, and tale-bearing. On the last two Sundays we entered into a full explanation of everything concerning detraction and calumny. Tale-bearing may be disposed of in a few words. We sin by tale-bearing every time we repeat to another with an evil motive what some one else has said against them.

Tale-bearing brings three people into play. A speaks to B about C, who is absent; what is said, whether it take the form of calumny, or detraction, or injurious words, is to the detriment of C. B takes part in this uncharitable conversation, encouraging it by questions, listening to it with approval, perhaps even promising not to repeat further what has passed. What does B then do but go straight to C and retail, probably with exaggerations, the utterances of C, taking care to add point to their malice. Now who is here the tale-bearer? Is it A? No. Is it C? No; it is B. Why? Because it is he that, having heard what one person had to say of another, then proceeds to pour into the ear of the one who was absent the evil that was spoken against him.

It is a vile and contemptible sin; it is betraying confidence, carrying tales where the author of them would least wish them to be heard, thus doing great harm. For what can a man feel who has been made aware of the unkind things said of him? It may be he is of a quiet, peaceable, gentle disposition, in which case he will try to dismiss the matter from his mind, though he will feel the sting all the same. But perhaps he is of a revengeful, passionate nature; then, very likely, he will fire up, returning insult for insult, detraction for detraction, calumny for calumny; he will plan revenge, and may even have recourse to law. Anger, hatred, strife, enmity, lawsuits, are often the results of tale-bearing. "The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed, for he hath troubled many that were at peace." He separates friend from friend, neighbor from neighbor, husband from wife, fanning the least spark of disunion into the strong, clear flame of enmity.

We now come to the remaining sins against the character of our neighbor. These may be classed under two heads:

I. Injurious words.
II. False suspicion and rash judgment.

We will devote ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to considering, as shortly as possible, these two groups of sins.

I

Injurious words come under our first heading. They also consist in speaking against the character of our neighbor, but they are to be dis-

tinguished from all that we have up till now considered on this subject, because they are spoken in his presence, to his very face. We sin by injurious words when we throw in our neighbor's face something that lowers him in the eyes of others.

We may do this by making his bodily faults and infirmities a reproach to him. The boys who mocked the prophet Eliseus did so when they greeted the old man with the words: "Go up, thou bald-head, go up, thou bald-head." God punished their insolence in a terrible manner, allowing two bears to come out of an adjoining wood and devour them.

To cast up his moral and intellectual defects against a man, is also a form of abusive language. King David, when flying from his own son, was treated in this way by Semei who called out to him: "Come out, thou man of blood, thou son of Belial," which means "son of the devil."

Such methods of speech, while they are incompatible even with good breeding, are utterly at variance with brotherly love and charity. They very often please and amuse and commend themselves to those who listen to them, but they excite great indignation and bitterness in the heart of him against whom they are directed. What does our Saviour say of such behavior? It is well worth while to take note of His own words. "You have heard that it was said to them of old, thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall

say to his brother 'Raca' shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say 'thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire." What was our Saviour's meaning? He wished to explain to us that it was a great sin to deal a blow at our neighbor, but that it was possible to offend against brotherly love not only by deeds, but in thought, by harboring feelings of anger and hatred toward him, and in word by addressing him in insulting and humiliating language: "You villain, you idiot, you fool." Do we think we know better than our Saviour, the judge of the living and the dead? No. Then let us be convinced that the use of rude and insulting language may be, and often is, a grievous sin.

II

The last sins against the character of our neighbor with which we have to deal are false suspicion and rash judgment; these hang together and have a great family resemblance. They do not, like tale-bearing, consist of words, but only of thoughts, and we are guilty of them when we think ill of our neighbor, without sufficient grounds. How are they to be distinguished from one another? False suspicion only supposes and thinks probable what is evil of another; while rash judgment holds it to be true and certain.

We sin, therefore, by false suspicion when, without sufficient reason we suspect evil of our neighbor; and by rash judgment when, without sufficient reason, we believe the evil to be true and certain.

King Saul sinned by false suspicion against

David. David had fled from the court, and from the king himself. The reason, which was as clear as daylight, was, as Saul very well knew, that he had attempted David's life. But the king, without a shadow of evidence, unjustly suspected him of deception. Again, St. Paul was shipwrecked, and had landed on the island of Malta, while he was gathering wood to pile up a fire for himself and his fellow-sufferers a poisonous viper bit him on the hand. What conclusion did those around him draw from this occurrence? "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer." They had no other grounds for their opinion than that, barely had Paul escaped death by drowning, before his life was again endangered by a poisonous serpent. Nevertheless, they were quite ready to decide against him and think the worst—"undoubtedly this man is a murderer."

Men sin by false suspicion and rash judgment more frequently and more grievously than we think. If anything goes wrong in the household, the neighborhood, or town, immediately hundreds of minds busy themselves in endeavors to fasten the blame on some one, and very often they imagine they have succeeded. "It is so and so," they say, "without the least shadow of doubt." As long as these false suspicions and unjust judgments remain locked in the heart and are not formulated in words the reputation of our neighbor does not suffer in any practical way. He is lowered only in the mind of the person who has formed a bad opinion of him and denies him the respect to which he is really entitled.

False suspicion and rash judgment are sinful

because they impute evil to another without reason, and because they frequently have their root in sin, the sin of envy. If a man is successful in making money suspicion is ever ready to attribute his riches to other means than thrift and honest work; if he is appointed to some post or public office it is not to his ability or merits he owes it, but to jobbery or even to bribery and corruption; if he is particularly pious and virtuous, rash judgment will allow it to be nothing but shame and hypocrisy. Hatred and the desire for revenge are also inexhaustible sources of false suspicion and uncharitable judgments. The same may be said of pride, which loves to belittle and look down on others, ascribing to them all that is unworthy, so as to appear to greater advantage in comparison. An evil conscience can not endure to see lives of piety and virtue, and, in order to feel free to look upon good people as not better, but worse than themselves, they persuade themselves that all goodness is merely assumed as a cloak for secret vice.

The gravity of these sins of rash judgment and false suspicion lies in the fact that by them we arrogate to ourselves the function of judge over our fellow-creatures: "Who art thou that judgest another?" says the Holy Spirit. By rash judgment we have the temerity to pronounce on things which God Himself will one day judge, or which He perhaps has already judged; and which He alone can rightly weigh and balance. The friends of the patient Job decided that he must have sinned grievously to suffer such heavy trials, but he resented their opinion of him, say-

ing, "Why do you endeavor to judge for God?" meaning, "How can you venture to interfere in what is entirely the province of the Almighty?"

By rash judgment we not only assume an office which belongs to God alone, but we undertake to do what we are in no way fitted for. A judge must be well acquainted with those laws and rights according to which he must make his decision, as well as with the facts upon which he has to pronounce. What should we think of a verdict given with no knowledge either of the law or the indictment, and without examination, witnesses, or proof of any kind? This would not be justice. What do we do when we rashly judge our neighbor? We pass sentence in our hearts on his actions, their aims and motives, coining the charge in our brain, with no other witnesses than our own conjectures, and no proof but our own unworthy suspicions. Yet we look upon our verdict as final, and expect it to be recognized by God and by men. The way we, who are utterly devoid of qualifications for the part, presume to act as judges of the most hidden aims and motives of our neighbor is in truth almost unbearable.

If we could even claim that we were kind and merciful in our decisions! In the eyes of the law it is better that ninety-nine guilty men should escape punishment than that one innocent man be unjustly condemned. If full proof is wanting then the prisoner goes free. Even when the evidence is overpowering it is very seldom that the full rigor of the law is exercised. But in cases of rash judgment the proceedings are very different; the innocent are pronounced guilty, good actions

are interpreted as bad ones, and sentence is passed on souls who have perhaps already earned God's favorable verdict or for whom He may have one in store in the future.

Our Saviour addressed special words to us to deter us from entertaining false suspicions against our neighbor or judging him rashly: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." Two things result from this: Firstly, if we judge others severely, then God's judgment of us will be hard; secondly, if our thoughts of others are loving, kind, and merciful, then we ourselves may hope to receive a lenient judgment at the hands of almighty God. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." Surely we are conscious that we need this leniency when we consider how much there has been in our own lives that is sinful and worthy of punishment, if not damnation. Let us judge ourselves; if we do, we shall not be finally condemned.

We have now finished the eighth commandment; we shall never sin against it if we guard our tongues. If we restrain our hands we shall never offend against the seventh commandment; if we keep a watch on our eyes and our hearts we shall not violate the sixth commandment; if we restrain and guard all the senses of our body we shall be enabled to observe the whole law of God. "Watch and pray." Watchfulness over our senses, joined with prayer to God for His help, are the means by which we may walk in the fulfilment of His word, and attain the reward of eternal life which He has promised us. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX

On the Right of the Church to Give Commandments

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (*John* xx. 21).

LAST Sunday we finished our consideration of the eighth commandment, and with it our instructions on the commandments come to an end; for it will be remembered that we explained the ninth commandment in connection with the sixth, and took the seventh and tenth together.

The catechism now enters upon the commandments of the Church, which it is our duty to obey as well as the commandments of God.

A number of commandments and laws have been made for us by the Church. The Popes and the universal councils of the Church have defined and formulated injunctions for all the faithful: for cardinals, bishops, priests, Religious Orders, and for people in every state and condition of life. She possesses a record of a complete constitution and system of law built up and developed during the many centuries of her existence. It would be too much to expect that every Catholic should study and learn these records by heart, and it would be no small task to go into each clause separately and explain it in detail. For ordinary purposes the commandments of the Church are reducible to six, which are necessary for all, and apply to clergy and laity, Religious

and seculars alike; they are binding on all, and must be universally known and observed. The following is the order in which they are given in the catechism:

1. To hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation.
2. To fast and abstain on the days appointed.
3. To confess at least once a year.
4. To receive the Holy Eucharist at Easter-time.
5. To contribute to the support of our pastors.
6. Not to marry persons who are not Catholics, or who are related to us within the fourth degree of kindred, nor privately without witnesses, nor to solemnize marriage at forbidden times.

Before considering these commandments in detail, one by one, it is important to answer the questions:

I. Has the Church the right to give commandments?

II. What is the logical outcome of such a right?

I

The Church most certainly has the right to give commandments; our reason alone suffices to tell us that. Even placing the Church on the lowest possible footing it must be admitted that it is at all events an organized association, or union, or society, or community; one on a very big scale, and of a very remarkable nature. Now even the smallest club or association of any kind can not exist without a head and some kind of guidance and direction. If the object be only to meet to-

gether and sing, there must be some kind of authoritative organization to determine and say what is to be done. Now the community of the Church, which is so complete and perfect in its union, must of necessity have heads and superiors who hold in their hands the power to give laws and to make rules and regulations. Mere common sense upholds us so far.

But the Church is a real kingdom; the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Its dominion extends beyond all other kingdoms; its origin, rooted in Christ, reaches up to Paradise; founded with the most sublime object, invested with the mission of saving the souls of men, its work is not for this world, though it is in this world; it is for the world to come, for heaven. The eternal, invisible King of this kingdom is Jesus Christ, King of kings, Lord of hosts. Who will deny to Him the right of giving commandments? He says: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." Mark well: "*All* power." *All* power over heaven, *all* power on earth. Now does not every king depute others to represent him, investing them with power and authority? This is what our Saviour did: "As the Father sent Me, I also send you"—"Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven"—"He who heareth you heareth Me, and he who despiseth you despiseth Me." What is the meaning of all this?—"I make over to you My power; I depute you to take My place; your laws shall be as binding as though they had

been made in heaven; to obey you is to obey Me, to disobey you is to disobey Me."

It is with justice, then, that we are taught that the Church derives her right to give commandments from Jesus Christ Himself, who has commissioned her to guide and govern the faithful in His name.

The Church possessed this power from the beginning; as early as the days of the apostles she held her councils and issued her decrees. St. Paul gave directions regulating the laws of marriage between pagans and Christians, and concerning the fulfilment of the Jewish ordinance, and probably on many other subjects of which we no account has reached us.

II

What is the logical outcome of the Church's right to give commandments?

It has a two-fold result; a result affecting the Church itself, and a result affecting us.

If the Church has the power to give commandments she must also have the power to enforce their observance, and to punish those who transgress them. The first entails the two others. If a teacher has the right to impose tasks upon his pupils and exact the performance of them no one would dispute that he must also be entitled to ascertain that these tasks are really performed; nor can the further right to punish lazy and negligent scholars be denied him. If the State has the power to issue laws, then its right to enforce their observance by means of the services of the police, and to punish those who offend

against them, follows as a natural consequence. Laws would be meaningless, the authority of the State would become a mockery, if the right to issue edicts was not backed up by the power to enforce them and to punish those who set them at naught; the sword of justice would be blunted, indeed. A king not only wears a crown on his head—the symbol of the highest authority which alone has the right to command; he also holds in his hand the scepter, the emblem of punitive authority. The order of things in the Church is the same. The Son of God has given her all power, not only to give commandments, but to watch over their observance and to punish those who disobey them. Priests are punished by being pronounced unworthy or incapable of saying Mass, the further exercise of their sacred office is forbidden them, they are declared unfit for the ministry, and are expelled from the ranks of the clergy. Rebellious laymen are denied the sacraments and participation in the Holy Sacrifice, and when they die Christian burial is refused them. The Church does not recoil when punishment is necessary, but she does not punish too severely, only withdrawing that of which the offender has made himself unworthy, and only for such time as he refuses to amend; she punishes with the object of converting. She has the right to punish and she exercises that right; for this reason, just as a king wields a scepter, St. Peter holds the keys, and a bishop carries a shepherd's staff in his hand.

But what happens when the Church and the State are at variance; when the State, refusing

to recognize the laws of the Church, tries to prevent their fulfilment, even protecting with its powerful arm those who disobey them? The Church, so richly endowed with spiritual authority, is poor and weak in the power of this world. It might even occur to us that, if Christ really empowered His Church to make laws and enforce their fulfilment by punishment, He might have put into her hands the necessary might and strength to give significance and effect to her authority. What answer can we make? Think, in the first place: if an aged father has not strength and vigor enough physically to subdue a rebellious son shall he, then, withdraw all authority over him, and make no attempt to control him at all? Though the Church is not in a position to carry out by force the laws she makes this does not alter the fact that she has the right to make them and to appoint punishments for those who refuse to submit to them. This right she claims and holds to.

But why, you will ask, did Christ not furnish her with sufficient power to ensure respect for her ordinances even from the State? This supreme power the Saviour seems to have reserved for Himself, to use in accordance with the designs of His inscrutable Providence. He has promised His Church that He will be with her all days; that the gates of hell shall never prevail against her, and that His Holy Spirit will abide with her forever. He allows His Church to be persecuted, interfered with, tormented, robbed, and oppressed, that she may be like Him in His lowliness; but, when the eternal Wisdom sees fit,

the strength of a mighty hand, more powerful than all the powers of earth and hell together, becomes evident, guiding and protecting her. This has never been more beautifully or more strikingly manifested than at the beginning of the last century. The first Napoleon was the most mighty monarch of the world, and had the whole of Europe under his feet. He confiscated the greater part of the possessions of the gentle Pius VII, pressed impossible demands upon him, sent away his counselors, banished as many cardinals as he pleased, finally making the Pope a prisoner, and keeping him in confinement. But the Pope, old and weak and forsaken as he was, understood his right to punish, and he excommunicated the emperor. Enraged, the emperor cried out: "Does the Pope think his excommunication will cause the arms of my grenadiers to fall out of their hands?" He meant, "The Pope may excommunicate me as much as he likes, but he has no physical force at his command to carry out his threats." But what happened? A few years later the arms literally dropped from the frozen hands of the imperial soldiers; the crown was plucked from the brow of the emperor; he became a prisoner and through years of solitude he had time to meditate on the might and power of Him who protects the Church.

Out of the right to give commandments arises for the Church also the right to insist on their being observed, and to punish those who disobey them. But for us, too, there is a result. What is it? For us there results the obligation to keep them; if the Church has received this right to

give commandments from Christ it follows that if we wish to please Him we must fulfil these commandments. "He that heareth you heareth Me; he that despiseth you despiseth Me." The matter is clear. It is folly to say: Yes, we know we must obey the commandments of God, but we are not obliged to obey the commandments of the Church; they are framed by men, and are merely human inventions; one may be a very good Christian and yet disregard them. The commandments of the Church are certainly the work of men, but of men who stand at the very head of the Church; God's representatives empowered by Christ to make laws and commandments. Is it not the duty of a child to obey his parents? Most certainly. Why? Because it is the will of God. Is a citizen not under an obligation to submit to the laws of the State? Certainly. And why? Because all authority derives its power from God. How, then, can we refuse obedience to the Church, which has been so clearly and expressly charged to make and issue commandments?

Let us, therefore, obey the commandments of the Church. They are neither numerous nor hard to follow; they are framed by a gentle mother, who asks of her children only what is for their good. To commemorate on certain days the mysteries of the life of Our Lord and of His blessed Mother by assisting at Mass; to learn, by fasting and prayer, the important and essential lesson of mortifying the flesh according to the example of our divine Saviour; to receive the sacrament of Penance and the divine Sacrament of the Altar at least occasionally. What manner of Catholic

would he be who refused to make the slight effort necessary to be faithful to these rules which have been observed by Catholics of every century and which the Church enjoins on us under pain of grievous sin? All the learned divines of the Church, all confessors, all pious Christians are agreed that it is a grievous sin to disobey deliberately a commandment of the Church in a grave matter. Love of our Saviour, of the Church, of our neighbor, horror of sin, solicitude for our salvation are the motives which should lead us to keep faithfully the laws wisely made for the kingdom of Christ upon earth. Amen.

SERMON XL

The Number and Object of Holy-days and Feast-days

"To hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation" (First commandment of the Church).

THE Church, as we have seen, is entitled to give commandments and the logical result of this is—for the Church the further right to insist on the observance of these commandments and to punish those who transgress them—and for the faithful an obligation to obey them faithfully and regularly.

The first of the six commandments of the Church is: "To hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation," and the catechism goes on to tell us that "we should keep the holy-days of obligation as we should keep Sunday." This answer will furnish us with matter for our consideration to-day, which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will devote to learning:

I. The number.
II. The object of feast-days and holy-days.

I

If the Church has the right to give commandments she naturally has power to institute and abolish and alter feast-days and festivals, and she uses this power as the needs and customs of different countries and people and times seem to require. The feasts of Christmas, Easter, Pente-

cost, and the Epiphany date from ancient days; later we get the feasts of our Lady, that of Corpus Christi, and several others. These festivals may be divided into two classes, those in honor of our Saviour, and the feast-days of our Lady and the saints.

In enumerating some of the principal feasts celebrated in the course of the ecclesiastical year we must remind you that the regulations governing these observances vary in different countries and dioceses according to the ruling of the local bishops; therefore, what is regarded as an important feast in one place is not invariably kept as such in another place. Those most generally regarded as the great feasts of the year may be said to be: The Circumcision, January 1; the Epiphany, January 6; Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, and Christmas. Then there are the feasts of our Lady, Candlemas Day, or the Purification, February 2; the Annunciation, March 25; the Assumption, August 15, and the Immaculate Conception, December 8. Of the saints' days the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, June 29, and that of All Saints are the greatest.

On every Sunday and on certain feast-days it is obligatory for the priest of a parish to offer his Mass for his congregation. In earlier times these feast-days were much more frequent than they are now. Their number has gradually been diminished, and the faithful are exempted from hearing Mass and abstaining from servile work on many of these "days of devotion," as they are now called; but the obligation of the priest still

remains, giving us the means of reckoning exactly how numerous such days originally were.

In addition to the classification of feast-days given above they may also be divided into certain series or cycles. For instance, there are the special celebrations in connection with Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, including along with the actual feast itself the special preparation which precedes it, and the commemoration of it which is made afterward. The Sundays of Advent prepare the way for Christmas, which is further commemorated in the feasts of the Circumcision, the Epiphany, and the Purification. Lent and Holy Week prepare us and lead up to the feast of Easter, of which commemoration is made on all the Sundays up to the Ascension. Then begins the preparation for Pentecost, also commemorated on every Sunday up to Advent.

"This is all very well," you may say, "but there are still far too many Church holy-days; there were too many of them formerly and they are still far too numerous." This is a thing we very often hear said. Why too numerous? Too many feast-days and holy-days give rise, it is true, to idleness and tend to foster a love of pleasure, excess in eating and drinking, less work is done, and industry and business and wages suffer. In the course of time, to suit the needs of different countries and peoples, the Church has gradually decreased the number of feast-days, but she will never do away with them altogether. On what grounds is it now asserted that there are still too many? Is everything that interferes with work to be abolished? Is the earn-

ing of money and the acquisition of property the only issue at stake? At this rate not only holy-days but Sundays also must be given up. If by means of these festivals of the Church and days of rest men are made to realize their eternal end, and are led to desire heaven, then certainly not one of them is superfluous. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things shall be added unto you." We shall understand these words better if we consider with what end in view these days have been appointed, and their observance commanded.

II

With what object has the Church appointed these feast-days and holy-days?

1. In order to keep before our minds the great events of our redemption. We often find that we remember things as long as they are recalled to us by the celebration of anniversaries, etc., but that when such celebrations cease, the events which they represent fade from our memory altogether. If we had no festivals of the Church to remind us of the great truths of religion, it is quite possible that a time would come when mankind would forget that Christ came down on earth, that He suffered and died and rose again, and that He ascended into heaven, from whence He sent us His Holy Spirit. By the constant Church celebrations the memory of Christians is stirred up and forced to turn to these great mysteries of the Faith.

2. This is the least part of it. The celebrations of the Church are so arranged as to enable us to

go through the whole history of the Redemption year by year, making it live again for our eternal and supernatural advancement and profit. Our daily work chains us to earth; the sorrows and anxieties of life press us down; nearly everything we see and hear and read and experience savors of this world, and is calculated to make us worldly-minded, material, and solicitous about the things of time. All our relations with our fellow-men tend in the same direction. What does the Church do? She has instituted a series of festival days and seasons to raise our thoughts upward and interest them in the things of heaven. During the four weeks of Advent we should, like the patriarchs in the Old Testament, long and sigh for the moment of the Saviour's birth. Christmas reminds us of that great day so rich in graces and blessings, the birthday of the world's happiness, when Jesus Christ took flesh and came into this world to manifest the mercy of Heaven to earth. Where would the world be now, what would have become of humanity if Christ had not become man? Is it not fitting that such an event should be celebrated as long as the world lasts? Is there a Christian heart which, in spite of the darkness and cold of a winter's day, is not filled with joy that the light of truth, the warmth of charity toward God and man has come on earth among us? In company with our Lady and St. Joseph we rejoice at the advent of the three kings who have sought the child and now kneel and adore Him, offering Him their gifts; at the feast of the Purification we assist at the presentation of the divine Child in the Temple. At the begin-

ning of Lent we retire with our Saviour into the desert to fast and pray; in Passion Week we follow Him to Jerusalem to meditate sorrowfully and with grateful and contrite hearts on all He suffered for us. Then follows Easter Day, that day of Joy when the Lord, rising glorious from the dead, gave proof of His divinity, and of the truth of His teaching. By the Resurrection the validity of the claims of the Church are established; it is the guarantee that Christ has power to make good His promises to us, and that, as truly as He is risen, so we, too, shall be raised up one day by His power. Easter is the feast of faith, of joy, and of hope; it is a victory more worthy of commemoration than any ever won by man over his fellows, for it is the triumph which secured for the children of God freedom from the tyranny of sin, of death, of hell. We have good reason to rejoice at Our Lord's apparitions to His holy Mother, to the disciples going to Emmaus, and the apostles assembled at Jerusalem, or on the sea of Tiberias, or the mountain of Galilee. Finally, we accompany Him to the Mount Olivet, from whence He ascended into heaven.

From Mount Olivet we return sorrowfully with His holy Mother and the apostles to Jerusalem to prepare with them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. A new festival, that of Pentecost, reminds us of the descent of the Holy Ghost, the enlightener of hearts, the fount of love, the consoler in sorrow, our strength in temptation, the giver of all good gifts. Where is there a day more worthy of being celebrated, throughout the length and

breadth of Christendom, by that Church which in its every part and member is animated and penetrated with the Holy Spirit of God?

The great festivals supply us, so to speak, with daylight, while the numerous lesser feasts of Our Lady and the saints, which occur in the course of the year, are, as it were, the stars dotted in the firmament.

3. Therefore, we see that feast-days are instituted with the object of making the great events of our Redemption live again year by year, and to enable us to follow them with wonder, gratitude, and joy, mingled with feelings of compassion, sorrow for sin, and desire for amendment. More than this, these celebrations are designed to apply to us the fruit of the special mystery commemorated, by inducing us to go to Mass, to receive the sacraments, and to enter by prayer into closer relation with the new-born, suffering, and risen Saviour. If these holy-days are kept in the spirit and intention of the Church can any one say they are too numerous? Rather one would feel there are too few.

What more is there to allege against the institution of special holy-days? A great deal: "What is expected of Christians on feast-days is only what they ought to do every Sunday."—But those who oppose the system of holy-days are likewise opposed to the observance of Sunday; for what actually happened when out of consideration for the pressure of worldly concerns and the business of life the Church curtailed the number of holy-days, abolishing the greater number of them? The State stepped in to safeguard the Sunday rest,

introduced fresh holidays, and now great exertions are actually being made to limit the working day to ten or even eight hours. "But what is done on holy-days might quite as well be done at will on any other day." Quite so, but the Church is a very wise instructor. She knows that a thing is more sure to happen if a particular day is appointed for it and she determines not only what we are to celebrate, but when the celebration is to be held. "But the system has been abused." No doubt there have been abuses, but this has been against the will and purpose of the Church. If all that is capable of abuse is to be done away with, then everything that is the work of human hands would have to be abolished. For it is only God's work in which we find no flaw, and that only so long as it emanates purely from God alone.

"Business suffers." Yes, but which is of the greater importance, the body or the soul, heaven or earth, time or eternity, the natural or the supernatural? There can be no question. Then which should come first, the observance of those days sacred to religious festivals, or the days given up to work? The answer is clear. In a race it is not the horse with the most beautiful tail, nor the most costly saddle, nor even the most spirited nor the best groomed that wins, it is that one which arrives first at the goal.

4. Our kind Mother the Church specially wishes her holy-days to furnish working people with a relief from the drudgery of their daily life, and to be to them a recreation after the exertions of their strenuous labor, a rest after their long spells of unremitting toil. She hopes by the general ces-

sation of work, which makes it possible for entire villages, parishes, and towns to take part in these celebrations, by the quiet and peace, the sound of the bells, the holiday clothes, the happy faces, the decorated churches, the ceremonial of the services and the solemn singing, to arouse in the hearts of men those dispositions which draw their thoughts away from earth and raise them toward heaven, to the contemplation of God, thus enabling them to join with the holy angels in praising, thanking, and loving God, and by rest, peace, and joy to experience a foretaste of the happiness which He has in store for us. Amen.

SERMON XLI

On the Duty of Hearing Mass on Sundays and Holy-days

"To hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation" (First commandment of the Church).

THE first commandment of the Church is "to hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation." We have already considered the number of the festivals of the Church, and to what end they have been instituted. We will to-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, give our attention to the three following points:

I. The full purport of the first commandment of the Church.

II. Whom it concerns.

III. How it may be transgressed.

I

By the first commandment of the Church we are commanded to hear Mass with due attention, reverence, and devotion on Sundays and holy-days of obligation.

Why does the Church attach such importance to our assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass? Because it is the supreme act of divine worship; the one of all others most conducive to our salvation and to the glory of God. For what takes place in the Mass? The sacrifice which Jesus Christ completed on the cross is renewed in an unbloody manner; the Son of God, who made Him-

self obedient to His heavenly Father even unto the death of the cross, humbles Himself once more in His sacred humanity before Him, and descending to the level of this earth, to the altar, assumes in the hands of a sinful man the appearance of bread and wine. All the saints in heaven, all the choirs of angels, heaven and earth together, can not honor God as He is honored and glorified by one single Mass. We have no better means of worshiping God than by assisting at the Holy Sacrifice; by it we fulfil our primary and most essential duty, the obligation which is laid upon every man in the whole world, to reverence his Creator. It is a work full of profit to us, for by it we creatures are furnished with the means of thanking God for all His goodness, and of begging and obtaining from Him many powerful graces of which we stand in need: contrition for our sins, strength against temptation, comfort in suffering, light in doubt and darkness, constancy in the practice of all good, perseverance to the end. If a doctor were to feel sure he could cure his patient by sending him to drink the waters at a certain health resort he would be failing in his duty if he did not prescribe such treatment, especially if the place could be reached easily and at moderate cost. It is on similar grounds that the Church so strongly advocates the hearing of Mass, by which the glory of God and the work of our salvation is better furthered than in any other way.

At how many Masses are we bound to assist? On Sundays and holy-days we must assist at *one,* but it need not necessarily be a High Mass or a

Mass with a sermon. At the same time it is expected that Christians, especially those whose knowledge of their religion is imperfect, will occasionally make a point of assisting at sermons and instructions in order to deepen and widen their grasp of sacred things.

Where must one hear Mass? Must it be in one's parish church? This is not obligatory. It may be heard in any public church or chapel.

How must one hear Mass? With great attention, reverence, and devotion. In order to fulfil the obligation it is necessary to be present in the church in which the Mass is being said, or, if the church be too full to permit of this, to be in some way at least in touch with those who are actually in the church. Mass is to be heard with due attention; the mind directed to the events that are going forward on the altar. It is to be heard with due reverence. Reverence is shown by the attitude of the body; the hands, the eyes, the knees. Oh, if we could only see with what deep reverence the holy angels, those princes of heaven, contemplate the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, the demeanor of Catholics would be very different from that which they at present assume!

With due devotion—Ah, you say, now you come to the point. I am quite ready to go to Mass regularly, I wish with my whole heart to obey the Church, but I can not attain the necessary degree of devotion. There is so much which hinders it; the coming and going, the noise and whisperings of those around me, the singing and also my own domestic cares which pursue me even at prayer and into the church. Now, dearly beloved

brethren, be comforted. The devotion necessary for fulfilling the obligation of the Church is not hard to realize; open your prayer-book and read the prayers of the Mass, or take your rosary and recite, for instance, the five sorrowful mysteries, or join in the singing of the congregation, or be content just simply to kneel quietly before God, telling Him of all that is nearest to your heart. Pray for yourself, for those belonging to you, for your children, your parents, for your spiritual and temporal superiors. When the Offertory begins offer yourself to God; at the Consecration strike your breast, and while the sacred Host is elevated say: "Jesus, I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee with my whole heart!" At the elevation of the chalice say: "Jesus, for Thee I live, Jesus, for Thee I die, Jesus, Thine am I in life and death, in time and eternity." At the Communion rouse yourself to desire the body of the Lord. We find no difficulty in spending half an hour chatting with a friend. Is it, then, so hard to spend that time in the house of God, before His altar, and while He offers Himself in sacrifice for us, to make known to Him a few of the thoughts of our heart, and give Him a few words of love? The devotion which the Church requires in order to fulfil the obligation of hearing Mass consists merely in avoiding what is inconsistent with devotion, in refraining, for example, from looking about us, talking, or going to sleep.

II

The next question is: Whom does the first commandment of the Church concern? Who is

obliged to hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days? All who have attained the use of reason, unless excused by weighty reasons, are strictly bound to hear Mass. We may be considered to reach the use of reason about the age of seven. It is about that time that children begin to go to school; why should they not also go to church? But, you say, children do not yet understand what the Mass is? Well, grown-up people themselves understand it only in part; children are quite capable of realizing that something very holy, and to the glory of God, is taking place.

All those who have attained the use of reason are *strictly* bound to hear Mass. This means that knowingly and willingly to miss Mass by our own fault, through carelessness or indifference, is a grievous sin. There must be no mistake about this. The confessors and the divines of both modern and ancient times are at one on this point.

Any of the following reasons for remaining away from Mass must usually be regarded as insufficient: "I was very sleepy, and found it too hard to get up; the weather was bad; it was raining or snowing; or it was too hot." Now under some circumstances, especially in the case of delicate persons or children, or for those who have neither shoes nor stockings, such excuses would undoubtedly be valid; but not for strong, healthy adults." "We were traveling." Were you traveling on pleasure or on business? "On pleasure." Then your reason does not hold good. "The weather was so lovely I went for a run on my bicycle, or for a walk, and then fell in with so and so." All very well, but not sufficient reason

for shirking what is in the strictest sense a duty.

But we are entitled to look upon as lawful and valid such excuses as sickness, or the care of the sick, if there be no one to replace us; debility such that a walk to the church might lead to serious illness; or again the duty of looking after young children who can not be left alone. A doctor may, of course, visit the patient who needs him, and the fireman may labor on undisturbed at his work of rescue even should it keep him away from Mass; in fact, any undertaking which is urgent and will not admit of delay may be continued with an easy conscience, even at the price of missing Mass altogether.

III

Our next point is to consider how it is possible to sin against the commandment. We sin when we lose Mass wilfully, either entirely or in part, or when, during Mass, we give way to voluntary distractions or irreverent behavior.

To miss Mass through one's own fault is obviously not only a sin, but a mortal sin; nothing can detract from this. It is a melancholy fact that numbers of men and women, young people and even children, out of thoughtlessness, love of pleasure and amusement, or for social reasons, make an excuse of engagements and excursions of one kind or another to neglect Mass, not now and then, but almost as a rule. But this does not alter the matter, this does not mitigate the gravity of the sin; on the contrary, the greater the scandal given, and the more disastrous the results, the greater the guilt. Those who neglect Mass on

Sundays and holy-days will not remember it on week days either; those who neglect Mass will also avoid sermons and instructions. If the Mass of obligation be omitted on Sundays and holy-days no other pious work will be undertaken. One may venture to say boldly that those who on Sundays and holy-days commit sin by missing Mass will, in the course of the day, become guilty of many another sin. He who habitually stays away from Mass will stay away from the sacraments and will neglect prayer; he is a Christian in name only.

It is a sin to come late for even a part of Mass by one's own fault and to lose a considerable part of Mass is a grievous sin. A considerable part of Mass would be lost if one were to arrive after the Offertory and leave again before the Communion.

It is possible to go to Mass and yet commit sin. This happens first by giving way to wilful distractions, but still more by disrespectful and irreverent behavior. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him"; so spoke the prophet Habacuc to the Israelites. With how much more truth might these words be addressed to Christians? The Lord is present in His holy temple, with His divinity and His humanity; He is not only present, He is offering Himself for us. We do not stand like the Israelites in the forecourts of the temple, but in the very temple itself, close to the altar. "Let all the earth keep silence before Him." If the whole earth is silent before Him, what should be the attitude of those who stand before His face; how great their reverence, their devotion! What language can

one use to speak of men who come to the Holy Sacrifice and stand looking on with hearts as unmoved as the statues and the pillars around them, as cold and unfeeling as the stones beneath their feet; who find nothing better to do than to stare about in a bored way, to chatter and laugh and even to give themselves up to unholy thoughts in the very Holy of Holies itself. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."

We should be making a very good resolution, dearly beloved brethren, if to-day at the Elevation we promised our Saviour, as far as in us lies, to attend regularly every Sunday and holy-day at the Holy Sacrifice in which He offers Himself for us. Lord, if Thy love and Thy majesty allow Thee to give Thyself daily as a sacrifice for me, it will not be too much for me to assist on the appointed days at this divine sacrifice. I am put to shame when I hear of the zeal of those newly converted from paganism, who gladly undertake long journeys to be present at Mass; I am filled with confusion when I see the piety of country people and other devoted Christians who rise early day after day and walk long miles to secure for themselves this great privilege; but at all events I promise Thee that I will no longer behave as if these great mysteries had no meaning for me. I believe in them with my whole heart, and, because of this my belief, help me, my God, to assist at them with devotion and with faith, in obedience to the commandment of Thy Church. Amen.

SERMON XLII

On the Duty of Fasting on the Appointed Days

"To fast and abstain on the days appointed" (*Second commandment of the Church*).

THE course of these considerations now brings us to the second commandment of the Church, one which, in spite of its many grounds of justification and the binding obligation it lays upon us under pain of grievous sin, is frequently violated and transgressed. It will be my endeavor in giving my instruction on this subject to avoid on the one hand an exaggerated and uncompromising severity, while being careful on the other not to give too free a rein to mere heedlessness and indifference.

The second commandment of the Church is: "To fast and abstain on the days appointed." It commands two different things: (1) to keep the fast-days; (2) to keep the days of abstinence. We will begin with the precept of fasting, considering, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. The meaning of this commandment.
II. Its application.
III. Its object.

I

The catechism asks: "What do you mean by fast-days?" "By fast-days I mean days on which we are allowed but one full meal." This one meal

a day, taken in the evening after vespers, was the original rule for a fast; but, it being found very difficult to abstain from all food till late in the evening, the usual vesper hour came gradually to be changed for an earlier one, in order that the time before breaking the fast might be shortened. In the course of years the prescribed evening meal became earlier and earlier till it reached mid-day, before which hour it is forbidden to take it even now.

Is any other food besides this one meal allowed when fasting? Originally nothing more was allowed, but the Church, as time went on, to a certain extent relaxed the rule.

1. With reference to breakfast. It is now allowable to take in the morning a couple of ounces of bread or toast. This is a great boon, even though it be only just enough to break one's fast.

2. In the evening a light collation is at the present time universally allowed. But what constitutes a light collation? I will not undertake to regulate for you the exact amount of food permitted; nor do I ask of those who fast to have scales on the table to weigh every mouthful they eat. But this much I will lay down: that the collation together with what one takes in the morning should not amount to more than half a full meal. This rule is so fully generous that without committing sin it can hardly be exceeded; but on the other hand it is so reliable and sure that to take a stricter view would be to out-do the Church in severity.

A full meal at mid-day, a piece of toast in the morning, a light collation in the evening is the

regulation allowance prescribed by the rules of the Church for those who are bound to fast.

II

How far do these rules for fasting apply, on how many days, and to what people? The days appointed for fasting are: (1) The forty days of Lent, with the exception of Sundays. It must be noted that Lent begins at midnight; therefore, those who eat flesh-meat on Shrove Tuesday after twelve at night are transgressing the Church's laws of fasting and abstinence, and are also very probably acting in direct opposition to the spirit of the Church by ushering in the penitential season with dancing and dissipation. (2) The ember-days, namely, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at the beginning of each season of the year, are also fasting-days. Formerly these were the days specially set aside for ordinations, and the faithful were exhorted to fast and pray that worthy priests might be raised up for the sacred ministry. The whole three days are always in the same week, and occur in the third week in Advent, after the first Sunday of Lent, in Whitsun week, and in the third week in September. (3) Certain vigils, i.e., the eves of great feasts such as Christmas and Pentecost, St. Peter and St. Paul, the Assumption, and All Saints. (4) The Wednesdays and Fridays of Advent in countries in which this usage obtains. These fasts are always announced from the altar on the preceding Sunday; and they vary in different countries and even sometimes in different dioceses of the same country.

What persons are obliged to fast? All Christians who have completed the age of twenty-one, and are not excused by any just cause. Those, therefore, who are under twenty-one, even though they be strong and healthy, are under no obligation to fast, though they are bound to abstain.

Moreover, those for whom there exists any just cause are released from the duty of fasting. Note well that it must be a *just* cause. Many reasons are brought up as excuses which are not of sufficient importance. People say: "When I fast I get a headache." Very likely, but if you persevere you will get over that. "Fasting is a beautiful idea; I would gladly do it, but I find it very hard." Is that all? Certainly to observe the rules of fasting entails some hardship, and if that were a ground of excuse then nobody would keep them. But, apart from these frivolous excuses, there are quite a number of genuine and valid ones, which can be urged with perfect justice. I will enumerate the principal ones. *Sickness.* Invalids have usually little or no appetite, and it is, therefore, right they should take what food they can whenever they feel able to relish it. *Convalescence* is a time when strength is being gradually recovered, and for this as much food as the patient can eat is required. *Age.* The Doctors of the Church suppose that men over sixty and women over fifty should, on account of their age, be exempt from the rule of fasting. This is allowing the utmost latitude. *Hard Work.* The greater number of people engaged in hard work are not expected to fast; nor are those whom it would hinder in discharging the duties of their

calling. But it must be borne in mind that a dispensation from fasting does not carry with it a dispensation from abstinence.

Well, you say, there are very few left to fast. Youth and age are exempt; illness, weakness, convalescence likewise; hard work and even special duties also. This includes every one except the few who, in their best years, have nothing to do but to walk about and amuse themselves, to eat, drink, and sleep. Such people most certainly are left and many others besides, who have no valid reason to give. Oh, you say, I have no valid reason, but I always apply to my confessor for a dispensation. A confessor has no power to dispense except in cases where a valid reason is at all events advanced. If a desire to avoid mortification and self-denial is the only motive the dispensation does not hold good.

III

Now we come to the object of fasting. "Why," asks the catechism, "does the Church command us to fast and abstain?" "The Church commands us to fast and abstain in order that we may mortify the flesh and satisfy God for our sins."

Our Saviour Himself fasted for forty days and forty nights in the solitude of the desert. It was not necessary for Him to do this; then why did He do it? He wanted to set us an example that could not be overruled. If Christ, our Saviour, at the beginning of His public life fasted forty days what can be more fitting than that Christians should likewise fast? Will those who refuse to imitate Him in His fast be likely to pray with

Him in the Garden of Olives, to follow Him patiently carrying their cross on the road to Calvary, and to crucify themselves by dying to themselves and to their passions? No, they will not have courage for such things; for fasting is the easiest of them all. We must fast in imitation of our Saviour. The saints of the Old Testament, such as Moses and Elias, as well as those of the New Law, have all fasted; and it ought to fill us with shame to think that they loved it as much as we hate it and avoid it.

We must fast to satisfy for our sins. We have, every one of us, sinned, and each sin requires punishment and expiation. Shall we wait till the just God stretches out His hand to strike us, and visits us with suffering, illness, and agonizing pain, perhaps even with death itself. Oh, no, you will cry, we pray God to have mercy upon us! Is it, then, that you prefer to wait till the eternal punishments come upon us? Better a thousand times to suffer here below than wait till the life to come. By some means or other we must suffer; if not here then in eternity; if we do not want to suffer at the hands of God, then we must suffer at our own. If we are in earnest in realizing this we shall perform those most meritorious and efficacious works of penance appointed and commanded by the Church.

The exercise of fasting will help us to mortify the flesh and to subdue our evil passions. Christian endeavor is represented as a road leading to heaven, as a following and imitation of Christ; but it may also be looked upon as the continuous warfare between the spirit and the flesh. "They

that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with their vices and concupiscences." So says St. Paul. And which among us are likely to succeed in this work of crucifixion? Those who, though bound to fast, neglect to do so? Will such as these be able to resist the lusts of the flesh? Will they have strength to fight against the inclination to drink, to overcome temptations to vanity and pride? No, those who have not power to lift a light weight will not be able to move a heavy one. If we want to obtain the mastery over all that is low and animal in our nature we must resolve to observe with fidelity the Church's law of fasting.

Further, we should be faithful in this matter to prove our obedience to the Church, our Mother and our guide, on the road to our heavenly home. She says to us: "My child, this is one of my first and oldest commandments; for centuries past saints in every path of life, clergy, religious, and laity have observed it; so do you likewise. The rules of fasting have been greatly relaxed, and though the cases where excess in eating and drinking has resulted in ruin are numerous, no one has ever been known to come by their death through fasting. This commandment is for your good; be faithful to it. Thousands of people ignore it altogether, or treat it with neglect and insolence, setting it aside on the smallest pretext. Give me the consolation of seeing that the Church has still loyal, conscientious, obedient children. Follow her commandments and you will receive your reward." Amen.

SERMON XLIII

On the Duty of Keeping the Days of Abstinence

"To fast and abstain on the days appointed" (Second commandment of the Church).

THE second commandment of the Church commands us to do two things: (1) to fast on the appointed days; (2) to observe the days of abstinence. We have fully explained the meaning, the application, and the object of fasting; we will now go on to consider in exactly the same way:

I. The meaning of the law of abstinence.
II. Its application.
III. Its object.

I

What do we mean when we speak of keeping the days of abstinence? We mean that on certain days appointed by the Church we are bound to abstain either entirely or in part from the use of flesh-meat. The term "flesh-meat" includes all forms of food composed of or prepared with the flesh of warm-blooded animals; such dishes are those which most people prefer; they are acceptable to every one, and they are a great source of nourishment. By depriving us of them on certain days the Church is calling upon us to make a sacrifice, to undergo a deprivation, to perform an act of self-denial.

II

Further, let us consider the application of this commandment. The days on which a restriction is laid upon the kind of food we eat may be divided into two classes:

(a) Days on which the use of flesh-meat is entirely forbidden. These are: All Fridays throughout the year (except the Friday on which Christmas day and other holy-days of obligation may fall), the Wednesdays of Lent and Advent, the Wednesdays and Saturdays of the ember-days, the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of Holy Week, and the vigils of certain specified feasts.

(b) Days on which the use of fish and meat are not allowed at the same meal. These comprise all the days of Lent, including even the Sundays, and the same rule applies to every fast-day throughout the year.

It is to be noted that the rules and regulations regarding the use of eggs, butter, dripping, lard, and so forth, may vary in different dioceses, being milder in some and stricter in others, as the case may be. We are bound, in moving from place to place, to conform to the regulations of the diocese in which we happen to be.

There are several recognized and well-founded grounds for exemption from the foregoing laws of abstinence. I will enumerate them here, though it must be remembered that these, too, are liable to vary in different localities.

(a) Sick people, invalids, and convalescents may follow the orders of their doctor with an easy conscience. The use of flesh-meat may be consid-

ered for them almost as a medicine, of which the Church has certainly no wish to deprive them.

(b) In Germany the rule obtains that keepers of inns, hotels, and restaurants, who have a minimum of three people to cater for, are permitted at any time to place meat before their customers, and it is quite allowable for them to eat it. As to the hosts themselves and their families, they are only justified in eating it when they take their meals at the same time as their customers; otherwise they are bound by the law of abstinence. It can not, however, be said that this rule has received any official sanction outside of Germany.

(c) Business assistants, soldiers and sailors, apprentices, clerks, work-people, and servants of all kinds may, under certain conditions, eat flesh-meat on abstinence days. The conditions are: (1) that their employers are not Catholics; (2) that they are boarding with these non-Catholic employers; (3) that their employers refuse to give them a fish diet.

(d) The poor who live by alms are dispensed from the law of abstinence. They may make use of what is given to them and of whatever they may happen to have, because they are not in a position to provide their own necessaries.

(e) Of late years dispensations have been extended to all those who are obliged to perform hard work of an unusually severe character, such as is done by workers in smelting works or mines. But it must be remembered that it applies only to those whose work is of an *unusually* severe character. We make a difference, do we not, between a warm day and a particularly warm day? Warm

days in summer are not unusual, but particularly warm days with the thermometer standing at ninety in the shade are rather infrequent. All persons engaged in hard work of any kind are exempt from fasting, but only those whose work is of an unusually severe character are exempt from abstinence.

III

The Church has the same object in view in commanding us to abstain as in commanding us to fast, namely, the imitation of Jesus Christ and His saints, atonement for sin, the subjection of the flesh, and the inculcation of obedience to the Church.

There are many reasons for conscientiously observing the law of abstinence. First, it is easy of fulfilment, especially in these days when the Church has so greatly relaxed the severity of the regulations. Originally not only was abstinence from flesh-meat required, but from everything that is the product of an animal, such as milk, butter, cheese, eggs, and that on the Saturday as well as on the Friday of each week, and neither wine nor water was allowed till evening. When so many Christians in the past have faithfully kept these difficult rules, surely we shall willingly conform to those of our day, which are so much easier. In the Old Testament we find the Jews strictly carrying out the laws concerning food, preferring to die sooner than eat anything unclean (i.e., forbidden). What a lesson for us Christians! They refused to disobey the law and suffered martyrdom (1 *Mach.* i. 65, 66).

A great many people now are vegetarians, avoiding meat altogether, not on religious grounds, but for reasons of health. If they can so deny themselves day by day for their health's sake, shall we not, for the love of God, and out of obedience to the Church, do the little that is prescribed? Many Christians in Ireland, for instance, and pagans in India and China, never taste meat from one year's end to the other. Yet they live healthily, and do very hard work. And we complain because on a few days in the year we must either eat no meat at all, or else eat it only once.

So many people have good reasons for not fasting that comparatively few fast at all; but it is not they who complain of the abstinence. Oh, dearly beloved brethren, if we can not and do not fast, let us at least show by our fidelity to the laws of abstinence that we are not insubordinate children of the Church, offering resistance to the principle of self-denial!

Let us keep rigorously to the observance of the days of abstinence, and, as far as depends on us, see that others do so too. The mistress of the house can do a great deal to help in this regard by not ordering meat on Friday; if it is not there it can not be eaten; no one is likely to starve for want of it. It must be remembered that, like all the commandments of the Church, this law of abstinence is binding under pain of sin. Shall a Christian dare to offend God for the sake of a little bit of meat! Do not appeal, as so many do in this connection, to the words of our Saviour: "Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth

a man." This saying has been quoted right and left, against the principle of fasting and abstinence, and yet it does not bear upon it in the very least. There is nothing evil either in meat itself or in the eating of it, or it would never be permitted at all. But to eat it deliberately, in opposition to the strict and clearly expressed commandment of the Church, to gratify our appetite, thereby giving bad example at home and scandal abroad, that is and always will be a sin, in spite of all arguments to the contrary. Oh, Jesus, who hast appointed the Church Thy representative on earth, and endowed her with full powers; Jesus, who for love of me hung on a Friday on the cross, suffering hunger and thirst, and whose only word of complaint was "I thirst," never will I offer Thee, as Thy enemies did, vinegar and gall to drink; never will I offend Thee and Thy Church in order to gratify my palate! Amen.

SERMON XLIV

On Receiving the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist

"To confess at least once a year"—"To receive the Holy Eucharist during the Easter-time" (Third and fourth commandments of the Church).

We have discussed in detail the first two commandments of the Church. We will to-day consider the third and fourth together, and this meditation will end our explanations of the commandments of the Church. The third commandment of the Church is: "to confess at least once a year." There can be no sort of difficulty as to the meaning of these words. The fourth commandment of the Church is: "To receive the Holy Eucharist during the Easter-time." By this we are commanded to receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, at Easter-time. Where? It is generally understood that it should be in our parish church. Easter-time, or the season for the Paschal obligation, varies in different dioceses, being longer in some and shorter in others, but usually it begins with the beginning of Lent, and ends either on the Sunday after Easter Sunday, Low Sunday, Pentecost, or Trinity Sunday.

It may be asked: At what age should one go to confession and communion? To this we answer: As soon as we are capable of being instructed in these sacred mysteries so as to receive

them with profit and fruit; this decision must be left to our pastors.

The obligation enjoined by these two commandments is a strictly binding one. In some catechisms the question is asked: "What sin does he commit who neglects to receive communion during the Easter-time?" To this the answer is returned: "He who neglects to receive communion during the Easter-time commits a mortal sin."

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the Church asks and requires only that we should go to confession and communion once a year. She requires a great deal more. She exhorts and urges us to receive these holy sacraments very often. In order to induce us to follow this counsel of the Church it will only be necessary to convince ourselves:

I. With what good reason the Church has given us this advice.

II. Of how little value are the arguments brought forward against it.

I

The Church has two reasons for so decidedly and emphatically wishing us to receive frequently the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist. She wishes it, first, for the honor of Jesus Christ; second, for our own profit and salvation.

1. The honor of Christ. Both these sacraments were made by Jesus Christ; the one is the outcome of His love, the other of His mercy. Both are fruits—we may even say the most sublime and glorious of all the fruits—of the tree of the cross, and their institution is most closely con-

nected with the Lord's passion. On the evening before He suffered, Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and on the day after His sufferings, the very day of the Resurrection, He instituted the sacrament of Penance. He has honored His bride, the Church, by entrusting to her the administration and dispensation of this treasure of grace, and it behooves her, on her side, to strive to pay Him honor in return for so signal a mark of His favor. It is to His honor that we should have faith in the power of His sacraments; and not only that we should have faith, but that we should know how to value them at their true worth, and, further, that we should receive them fervently, making use of them for life and death. Therefore, the Church wishes the faithful to receive these sacraments often, very often, because the honor of Jesus Christ requires it.

In the same way the Church desires this for the sake of our own salvation. Her object being to fulfil her mission of leading our souls to their true end, eternal life, she must also be solicitous to supply us with the best and safest means to attain this purpose, advising and encouraging us to make use of them.

Now the Church well knows who it was that gave us these sacraments, and what great virtue they contain. The catechism of the Council of Trent, in speaking of the Blessed Sacrament, says: "The advantages which flow from its participation are too numerous and important to be expressed in words." On this account the same book charges pastors most strictly to teach their

flocks what an overflowing abundance of all good gifts is stored up in these sacred mysteries.

The reception of the sacrament of Penance is also of the greatest benefit to our souls; every act which the penitent is called upon to perform being salutary in the highest degree. By examining his conscience he gets to know himself; he looks back at the past and is sorry; he looks to the future and makes good resolutions; he humbles himself before the priest in confessing his sins, and he performs the penance laid on him. The part played by the confessor is still more useful. He listens to the sinner, admonishes him of his duty, shows him his weaknesses, and gives him the remedy; he solves his difficulties, comforts him in sorrow, and gives him courage when he is inclined to lose heart. But more than all, the work of almighty God in the sacrament of Penance is to our profit and benefit. He remits at once and forever our sins with the eternal punishment due to them, giving us at the same time fresh graces. Well might the Fathers, speaking at the Council of Trent, say that whatever of piety, of holiness, of religion has been preserved "to our times in the Church of God is to be ascribed in a great measure to the influence of confession." It is the bulwark, the citadel of Christian virtue. We can say truly in our own day of those who succeed in attaining eternal life that for the most part they have reached it by means of the sacrament of Penance.

The sacrament of Penance is the stepping-stone to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and for most of us it is the door, and the only door,

to the kingdom of heaven. Is any one able to suggest a safer, surer, or better-tested road to eternal life? No. Then let us not blame the Church for ordaining and advising the frequent use of these two great sacraments.

II

The wisdom and reasonableness with which the Church recommends the frequent use of the sacraments are equalled only by the unreasonableness and unsoundness of the arguments brought forward against it by those who desire to free themselves from such an obligation.

We will deal with the objections advanced against the frequent reception of holy communion when we come to consider the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We will content ourselves to-day with merely saying a few words to those who oppose frequent confession.

Some say: "Frequent confession is unnecessary. The Church commands us to confess our sins once a year to a priest. I do so punctually, but I do nothing more. That is quite enough." Assuredly it is enough if our object is to avoid disobeying a commandment of the Church; to escape her punishments and to be accorded Christian burial. But is it enough if we want to live in a state of grace, and guard against the occasions of sin; to raise ourselves out of the swamp of evil habits; to be faithful to the advice, perhaps even the injunctions of our confessor; to have the salvation of our soul really at heart? No; for this a single confession a year will not suffice. Look back and consider at what period

your life was most innocent and pure, and you will find that it was when you were careful to frequent the sacraments. At what time did you fall most often and grievously into sin? Was it not as soon as you began to neglect confession and communion? How were you enabled to shake off and free yourself from the chains of vice? By making a point for a long time of approaching the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist regularly and often. You see that the frequent reception of the sacraments is useful in different cases. "Very likely," you reply, "but I have no time for it; day after day my business keeps me occupied from morning till evening, working early and late." Is it really true that you can not spare half an hour, I will not say every day, but every two or three months? Do you lack time to spend in the drinking saloon, or in playing cards, or for entertainments, concerts, theaters, balls, excursions, traveling? "Come," you reply, "a little recreation is a necessity." I quite admit that, but I do not admit that it is justified in making quite so great a claim on your time. If recreation is a necessity, the reception of the sacraments is necessary also, and a hundred times more so than any mere relaxation or enjoyment whatsoever. It is essential for the soul, for the spiritual life, for making progress on our journey to heaven. If you can find time for amusement, then you must also spare that which will enable you frequently to approach the sacraments.

Another says: "I have plenty of time, but to acknowledge my sins to a man is a humiliation

to which I find it very hard to submit." But it behooves us to be humble; it becomes every Christian, since Christ our Lord abased Himself to the shame of the cross, but most of all humility is seemly in one who has sinned. Why should he be counted better than he is? Surely it is only fair that a sinner, in order to obtain forgiveness, should be willing for a moment to be known as he really is—neither better nor worse. "Yes," you say, "I am willing to submit to this in the eyes of God, but not before a man." My good friend, you are forgetting your place. God Almighty is the one offended, and it is you who have offended Him. Who has the right to lay down the conditions of a reconciliation, God or you? The one offended, or he who has been guilty of the offence? It is certainly not you, but God Himself, and He has done so. Jesus Christ in person has named His representative and said to him: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." Do not presume to look for any other way of pardon.

We fulfil the commandment of the Church by receiving the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist at Easter-time. Here we would exhort those who go to confession only once a year not to delay when Easter-time comes, and put off their confession till the very last days of the Paschal season. Why? Because at such times the confessionals are besieged, and the priest is anxious to hear everybody, and to keep no one waiting too long. What happens? The very people who have not been to confession for a whole year, and who would require careful treatment, are heard hurriedly, questioned, exhorted,

and absolved in a few words. If the confessor were in such cases to spend time in asking and saying all that he would wish, there would be no end to it, and many would return home without accomplishing their purpose. The confessor at such times finds himself in the position of a surgeon after a bloody battle. Hundreds and thousands of wounded and dying have to be attended to. What is he to do? If he were to give to one the full benefit of his skill, perhaps the others would die without any help at all. So he must perforce content himself with applying the necessary bandages with as much dispatch as he can. So it is with a priest at the end of the Easter-time. Let us, therefore, make our Easter confession in good time, being the more prompt the longer we have waited since our last confession. But let us resolve to approach the sacraments often in the course of the year. We will not allow this to be the privilege solely of women and children, old men and young girls. Young men in their first vigor and bloom and through the years of special temptation, older men in the exercise of the full powers of life in the thick of the stress and storm of the world, pay honor to Christ when they present themselves in the confessional and at the Lord's table. They are a joy to the Church, a source of edification to the faithful, and a reproach to the negligent. They are securing their own eternal salvation, for we may look upon the frequent and worthy reception of the sacraments as a sure sign of predestination to eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XLV

Sin: The Nature of Sin

"For all that is not of faith is sin" (*Rom.* xiv. 23).
"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (*Rom.* iii. 20).

We have for a very considerable time devoted our instructions to the commandments, considering first the great commandment, next the ten commandments of God, and finally those of the Church. In connection with this subject we have still much to learn (1) with regard to the nature of the transgression which constitutes sin and which is of different kinds; (2) concerning the opposite of sin, namely, virtue and Christian perfection.

The subject of sin is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with sin in general, and the second with the different kinds of sin in particular. If we were to write a treatise on birds, for instance, we might divide it into two parts. In the first part we should deal with those things which are common to all birds, such as the wings, the plumage, the power of flying; in the second we should distinguish between birds of prey, singing birds, water birds, etc. I propose to treat the subject of sin in this way, considering it first in general, and next the different kinds in particular.

To-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it will be our purpose to find the answers to the two following questions:

I. What is sin?
II. How we are warned against it.

I

Sin, we are told by the catechism, is "any wilful thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God." This short definition clearly establishes that a sin consists of three parts; whenever we find them united we have a sin, but if one or more are absent then there can be no sin.

(1) To constitute a sin there must be in the first place a law commanding or forbidding something. Where there is no law, clearly it can not be transgressed; and if there is no transgression there is no sin. If we are endeavoring to ascertain in any given case whether or not sin has been committed, we must first determine if any given law has been violated. To neglect to follow a counsel is not to commit a sin, for a counsel is not a law. The same applies to the breaking of resolutions, and to the non-observance of the various regulations and practices of the different religious sodalities and confraternities.

One thing is strikingly clear in the definition of sin, namely, that it is to transgress a divine law. To disobey one of the ten commandments obviously entails this, for the ten commandments came direct from God. But what of the commandments of the Church, which have been formulated only by men? I still say that he who breaks a commandment of the Church violates at the same time a law of God, for Christ has said: "He that heareth you heareth Me, he that despis-

eth you despiseth Me." The same rule holds good as regards the commandments given by other superiors. It is a divine law, enunciated in the fourth commandment, that children should obey their parents, and inferiors their superiors; and that subjects should acknowledge the authority of the State. "There is no power but from God, and those that are are ordained of God." Therefore, children who set at naught the injunctions of their parents, and subjects who defy the laws of the State, are transgressing what is primarily an ordinance of God, though it reaches them through a human agency; for all lawful power has its origin in God, and the givers of just laws are acting as His representatives. Those who deny the existence of God shake to its very foundation the whole principle on which law and order rest. The atheists in France in the eighteenth century used to say, "Ni Dieu, ni Maître." ("No God, no Master.") They meant by this that they had no Lord either in heaven or on earth; and in truth if the first were true, if there were in reality no God, then the second would be realized also, for the lawful authority of one man over another would cease to exist. All men would be equal, and it would be the strongest or the most cunning or the most unscrupulous who would succeed in gaining the mastery over his fellow-creatures.

(2) To make a sin we must have a law. But it is not the law which is the sin; on the contrary, a law is something sacred and good and necessary, or at all events permissible. To constitute a sin we must not only have a law; we must have

a transgression of the law. Every law either tells us to do something (a command), or it tells us not to do something (a prohibition). Metaphorically speaking, a law points us out a way in which to walk, and very often a way that is steep and narrow and painful. If by doing what is forbidden we shrink back from the road indicated, we transgress the commandment, and that transgression constitutes a sin.

(3) But the transgression of a law is not always a sin. For this a third condition is needed, namely, that the transgression be wilful. This point will require a little more explanation.

Let us take the following case. A Catholic eats meat on Friday. This is a transgression of the law which forbids the use of flesh-meat on Friday. We have the law, and we have the transgression. But supposing that our Catholic had quite forgotten that it was Friday, and that it had only occurred to him after he had finished his meal. Then he is horrified and says to himself: "It is Friday; I have eaten meat; I have sinned." Is he right or wrong in saying this? He is wrong; he has not sinned, for his transgression was not wilful. He certainly ate the meat voluntarily; no one obliged him to do so, but that is not the question. The question is, did he wilfully transgress a law? No, he did not, for he did not remember the law. Clearly, in order to be guilty of a wilful transgression one must know the law and bear it well in mind.

Again, in some instances a man may disobey a law which is well known to him and which he has not forgotten, and yet his disobedience is not

voluntary because it is not his own free choice. Suppose he is on the way to his Sunday Mass. He knows the commandment and it is fully present to his mind. On entering the Church he is seized with a fainting fit, and is carried out and taken home. Though he has transgressed the law which requires us to hear Mass on Sunday he has not done so of his own free will.

When we say that to constitute a sin a transgression of the law of God must be our own choice, we do not mean by this that it is sin only when we transgress with pleasure. We can do a thing of our own free choice, which we are yet unwilling to do. Pilate condemned Our Lord to be crucified. He did it unwillingly, but he did it in the free exercise of his choice and not under compulsion. Actions done under the influence of drink, for instance, must be regarded as deliberate in cases where a man has deliberately made himself drunk, knowing full well that when in that condition he is inclined to be quarrelsome and pugnacious, liable to anger and given to fighting and to many other evil things.

II

We know what constitutes a sin, that it is a wilful transgression of the law of God. We must now inquire what we must look to to put us on our guard and warn us against sin. We have all got the voice of conscience within us to warn us against sin. The law itself is the outward bulwark against sin; but the voice of conscience defends us from it from within. A certain warmth is desirable for any dwelling-room, still more for

a sick-room. How is one to know if the requisite amount of heat has been reached? By a thermometer which registers the degrees and is the outward and external indicator of the state of the atmosphere; but we can gauge it also in another way, namely, by the state of our own feelings which tell us whether it is too warm or too cold.

The law, therefore, is a voice from without warning us against sin, but our conscience puts us on our guard against it from within. It is a voice inaudible and imperceptible to the ear, but which speaks to our whole inner consciousness. It is to be found in all, even those who have had little or no teaching as to right and wrong; it speaks before we commit sin, acting as our teacher and admonishing us, saying: "You must not do that; it is wrong, it is a sin"; while we are committing it, warning us: "You are committing sin"; and after we have done it, passing judgment on our action: "You have done wrong, you must repent." It takes vengeance on us for our evil actions, giving a sinful soul no peace, but punishing it with pangs of remorse. So powerful is the cry of conscience that nothing human can drown it, whether it be the words of individual men, the voice of a whole people, or all the eloquence of human passion. It silences our own self-made excuses, rises above the clamor of business, and the verdict of human judges, and not even all the force of so-called public opinion can succeed in overpowering or dulling the clearness of its utterances. Instances are known of criminals who had succeeded in evading justice, being driven by the torture of an unquiet conscience to

give themselves up and undergo sentence and punishment in order to find rest for their souls.

We must follow the dictates of conscience if we wish to guard against sin; obedience to its voice will bring light and security, comfort and joy. It is God's gift to us, and one which distinguishes us from the brute creation. If we hope to receive a favorable judgment at the hands of God Almighty we must respond and be faithful to its promptings, for the pages of three books will be searched before the eternal sentence is pronounced on us; the book of the law, the book of conscience, and, finally, the great book of the omniscience of God. Happy those whom these three witnesses acquit; their names will be written in the book of life. Amen.

SERMON XLVI

On Mortal and Venial Sin

"Thou hast the name of being alive and thou art dead" (*Apoc.* iii. 1).

We considered last Sunday what constitutes a sin. Three things are necessary: a law, transgression of the law and free choice in transgressing. We further saw that we are made aware of sin exteriorly by the commandments, interiorly by the voice of conscience.

We will now pass on to consider the different kinds of sin. When we call to mind the enormous multitudes of sins which have ever been and will ever be committed, it becomes evident that they must be capable of many divisions and subdivisions. One particular form of sin has been present in every child of Adam, baptized or unbaptized, with the exception of the most pure Mother of God, namely, original sin. It forms a class by itself as opposed to all the other kinds, which are grouped together under the name of actual sin. St. Paul divides sins into those of the flesh and those of the spirit (2 *Cor.* vii. 1). They can be further classified according to the particular law which they transgress. Every law contains either a prohibition or a command. A prohibition tells us what we ought not to do, and we disobey it when we think, desire, speak, or do that which it forbids us to think, desire, speak, or do; sins of this kind are called sins of commission. In con-

trast to them we have sins of omission; a command lays down for us what we must do, and we transgress it by neglecting to do that which it commands, namely, by omission. Holy Scripture tells us repeatedly that the kings of Israel neglected to take steps to prevent the worship of idols. They sinned by omission.

It will not be out of place here to call your attention to the fact that we may sin quite as often and as grievously by omission as by commission. Yet, experience shows that sins of omission are not so easy to remember, and when remembered are not repented of with the same fervor or confessed with the same explicitness as sins of commission. What may the cause of this be? It is because definite actions performed at a given moment impress themselves much more deeply on the mind than the mere omission to do certain things to which one can barely assign any particular day or hour. A father will never forget having in the heat of violent anger injured his boy by punishing him too severely; it is much more difficult for him to call to mind how many times he has altogether neglected his duty of correcting his children when they deserve it.

The principal division of sin is that by which it is divided according to the consequences that result from it, in other words, into mortal sin and venial sin. Let us now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, consider shortly:

I. The reasons for this division.

II. The marks that distinguish mortal and venial sin.

III. The origin of the names "mortal" and "venial."

I

By dividing sins into greater and lesser, or mortal and venial, we take it for granted that by no possibility can they all be considered of equal gravity. This is self-evident, you will say. Obviously, there is a great difference between telling a white lie, for instance, and committing perjury; or between treading on some one's toe and driving a dagger into his heart; every law, every tribunal and every judge is at one in this assumption, and punishments and penalties varying in length and severity are appointed by the laws of the land for the different crimes, offenses, and transgressions of which men are capable. We have the death sentence, penal servitude, imprisonment, punishment by fine or by censure. The matter seems to us clear enough, but it was not always looked upon in this way. If we assert that faith alone is necessary to salvation, what sins would then be deserving of eternal damnation? One only—unbelief. All sins apart from this one of unbelief, be they what they may, and no matter how grievous they might appear in our eyes, would not exclude the sinner from the kingdom of heaven, and therefore would be classed as venial sins. This was actually the theory of the originators of the so-called Reformation, and on this account Catholic teaching has been careful to prove that all sins are not of equal gravity and can not be placed in the same category. The truth of this teaching is shown by our Saviour's

own words, "Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?" What was Our Lord's meaning? Clearly this: You can remark and blame trifling defects in your neighbor, while passing over and ignoring your own grievous sins. He compares sins to motes and beams. What is the difference between a mote and a beam? A mote is a tiny particle of dust hardly perceptible, whereas a beam is a large straight piece of timber which it would be impossible to overlook. So, if sins can be compared to motes and beams they can not possibly be all on an equal footing; some must be greater and some lesser. The same truth is expressed by our Saviour's words to Pilate: "He that hath delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin." Our Lord meant to say: "No doubt, Pilate, you have sinned, but not so grievously as those who delivered Me to you." In face of these words, therefore, it is impossible to think that the guilt of all sins can be the same, for if it were so the sin of Pilate would have been as great as that of those who delivered the Saviour into his hands.

Very well, you may reply, you have no doubt clearly proved that sins vary in gravity; some are less and others more grievous. But that is not enough; you must go on to show us that the difference is so great as to justify some being looked upon as mortal, others as venial sins. This is also taught by Holy Scripture and has been the tradition and belief of centuries. St. Paul in more than one passage enumerates a list of offenses which render those who are guilty of

them deserving of eternal death. Those are the mortal sins. But there are others of so slight a nature as to be almost invisible to the human eye, though they can be detected by the eye of God.

II

What are the distinguishing marks of mortal and venial sin? For a mortal sin the catechism tells us "three things are necessary": (1) "Grievous matter," in other words, to make a mortal sin it is not enough to transgress the law of God, it must be to a considerable degree and in an important matter; (2) "sufficient reflection" —where this is absent either wholly or in part there may be sin of a lesser kind, but there can not be mortal sin; (3) "full consent of the will" —suppose a case where a law is transgressed in an important matter, and with clear and complete knowledge of the magnitude of the sin, but it is committed under the influence of great and overwhelming fear, or in such an agitated and confused state of mind that the will is robbed of all power and impelled in spite of itself to do wrong. Under such conditions a man may sin, but it would be hard to say that he had sinned mortally.

Where the three following conditions occur together: Transgression of the law of God in a matter of importance, clear knowledge of the understanding, and full consent of the will, then we have mortal sin. And now as regards the marks of venial sin, are they difficult to recognize? No. Where one or more of the three conditions necessary to mortal sin are absent, then either

there is no sin at all or there is venial sin. Venial sin is "an offense against the law of God in matters of less importance, or in matters of great importance it is an offense committed without sufficient reflection, or full consent of the will."

III

Finally, we will inquire into the meaning of the names "mortal" and "venial."

Why is this sin called *mortal?* Why do we call certain poisons deadly poison, and describe certain diseases, wounds, and injuries as mortal? Because they have power to kill, and almost invariably bring death in their train. Why, then, are certain sins called mortal sins? Because they lead to the death of the sinner. Do we mean by this the death of the body? Often enough a sinner is strong and healthy in spite of his wrongdoing. Is it, then, his soul that dies? No, for the soul is immortal. By mortal sin the image of God is effaced in our soul, the germ of eternal life is destroyed; we die to God, and to the true glory and meaning of life: "Thou hast the name of being alive, but thou art dead;" the soul lives, just as the body lives, but as regards eternal life with God, which it was created to enjoy, it is dead; spiritually it has become a corpse. By its results we can see all the hideousness of mortal sin. Just as a corpse has no power to return to life, so has a soul guilty of mortal sin no strength of its own, to live to God once more. Herein consists its first death. If a man leaves the world in this condition he falls into hell, so dying a second time; then he is dead, indeed, and

will not live again for all eternity. It is because every mortal sin brings this first death upon the sinner, often condemning him to the second awful death also, that it is called mortal. Clearly every mortal sin must mean death, for to sin grievously is to set one's self up in opposition to the will of God, with clear knowledge and full consent. It is to turn one's back on the Almighty and say, I put my will before Yours, I refuse You obedience, creatures are more to me than You are. Such a soul ceases to be the child and heir of the kingdom of God; it no longer reflects the image of God, for it has completely turned away from its Maker. Such a soul is dead. Therefore, "this sin is called mortal, because it deprives us of spiritual life, which is sanctifying grace, and brings everlasting death and damnation on the soul."

The lesser sins are called *venial* in contrast to mortal, because they are more easily pardoned. Even without confession they can be remitted by contrition joined to good works and to suffering: or by the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, Extreme Unction, and the use of sacramentals.

We will end our meditation with a thought that ought to be deeply engraved in the heart of every Christian. Sin is the greatest and the only true evil, because all others may contain some germ of good or be capable of producing some good. But sin attacks the honor of God Himself and lessens His glory, while all the other evils in the world affect only creatures. It is the true, the greatest, the only evil. We must all detest it from our hearts and avoid it with all our strength. Amen.

SERMON XLVII

On Sin as an Offense Against God

"Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God" (*Jer.* ii. 19).

We have considered in these instructions the nature of sin, that it is "any wilful thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God." We have seen that sin is divided into sins of commission and of omission; into those of the flesh and those of the spirit; but above all into mortal and venial sin. Further, we have learned what is necessary to make a mortal sin, namely, (1) grievous matter, (2) sufficient reflection, (3) full consent of the will. To-day we will endeavor to realize the motives that should deter us from committing mortal sin, considering to this end its nature and evil consequences. We will make all our meditations on this subject in union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ, placing them under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and imploring, through her intercession, the grace to obtain a sincere detestation and horror of sin.

In order to take in at a glance the whole range of the subject we are going to consider, we will divide it into two clear and distinct parts, namely, (1) the attitude of the sinner toward God, (2) God's attitude toward the sinner.

What is the sinner's attitude toward God? He is guilty (1) of a grievous offense against God, His supreme Lord, (2) of shameful ingratitude to

his best Father, (3) of contemptible disloyalty to Jesus Christ, his most loving Saviour. Sin is an insult to the majesty, the goodness, and the mercy of God. Can a mere human creature have power so to offend God? Not certainly in any sense implying shame or suffering to the Almighty or interference with the harmony of His nature and works, but only in the sense that sin really and in truth is in its essence an insult to the Supreme Being. The Book of Ecclesiasticus says of sinners that they "despised the fear of the Lord," and in the New Testament St. Paul tells us that "transgression of the law dishonoreth God." God Himself, speaking to the sinful children of Israel, said: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me." Since we have determined, therefore, that sin is an outrage to God, it is important for us to consider and weigh how great, how heavy, how deep, how deadly is the offense we thus offer Him, and to arrive at some conclusion on this point let us ask ourselves the following questions:

I. Who is it that is offended?
II. Who is it that offends?
III. How is the offense committed?
IV. Why is it committed?

We will to-day confine ourselves to the first point exclusively.

Who is it whom we offend by sin? An offense is serious in proportion to the dignity of the person at whom it is aimed. When one child hits another in the face no one thinks very much of it; no doubt it was an insult, but the object of it was

only a child. But what should we think if a son were to strike his father in the face; such an offense would be grievous indeed, and under the Old Law it was punished by a shameful death, because a son ought to look up to his father and reverence him above every one in the world. If a rebel should dare to lay hands on the crown of a king, to seize hold of the scepter and wrench it from his grasp, to overturn the throne, this would be an offense so serious that loyal subjects could scarcely find a name shameful enough to describe it, or a penalty severe enough to punish it adequately. In Dante's Inferno rebels against the majesty of the emperor are placed with Judas, in the lowest hell. It is evident, and can not seriously be contested, that the gravity of an offense depends in great part on the dignity of the person offended. Well, then, whom do we offend by grievous sin? We may call Him at whom we have dared to level our attacks Our Father, for He is that before all else; our sovereign Lord, for such He is in truth; our King, the King of kings, wearer of not one but of many royal crowns which we have raised our hand to seize. Must I prove this to you?

(a) He wears on His brow the crown of Creator, for His almighty hand it was that brought you forth out of the abyss of nothingness, from which you yourself were powerless to emerge, or your fellow creatures, or the angels themselves, to draw you. Had you never been created you would now be less than the dust at this moment on your own shoes. You owe God everything: the air you breathe, the light that surrounds you, your

food, drink, clothing, soul and body, life and existence itself. If you were to spend all your time and the whole of eternity in praising your creator for making and maintaining you, it would not be too much. On the contrary it would not be enough; for He is the Creator, you the creature; He is the Lord, you are His servant; and not only is He your creator, He is the creator and master of all things! "He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created." What a crown of glory is that of the Creator of the whole world! Contemplate the most perfect leaf of the most beautiful tree, and then consider that all the ingenuity and wit of man could not and never will be able to produce such another even with the aid of all the tools and machinery at his command. Then think of the number of leaves on one tree alone; the number of trees in one single wood; the many woods which lie scattered over the whole earth. And now lift up your thoughts from this earth to the heavens above, from men to the angels, the cherubim, the seraphim, and to the most pure Mother of God. Of what a multitude of creatures the kingdom of God is composed, and how great is the King who made all out of nothing, and governs and maintains it by His wisdom. Let us see how His subjects reverence Him. All material things are subject to His laws: the stars follow the course He has laid down for them; the saints and angels in heaven praise Him without ceasing: "The four-and-twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth on the throne and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne,

saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power; because Thou hast created all things and for Thy will they were and have been created." And to think that we, who are the work of His hands, should dare to say to so great a King: "I refuse to serve You; I will follow not Your will, but my own." Is such behavior not equivalent to raising a hand to strike the glorious diadem from the brow of our Lord, our creator, our benefactor? Is it not seeking to throw off the allegiance which, as His creatures and servants, we owe to our creator and master? Oh, the malice and temerity of sin!

(b) The crown of creator of the world is not the only glory of God Almighty which sinful man dares to assail. To Jesus Christ, God the Son made man, belongs the crown of Saviour of the world. If the title of Creator of the world is the honor peculiarly due to God the Father, that of Saviour of the world belongs to God the Son. "You are bought at a great price," says St. Paul —no less a price than that of the most precious blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, let us think of the suffering it must have cost Him to pay this price, and what pain He endured in every part and member of His sacred body for our sake, "from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein!" Call to mind what a sum of mental anguish the human soul is capable of experiencing through fear, repugnance, horror, sadness. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," and to this add all the unkindness that one man has power to heap upon another by scorn, contempt, ridicule, bitterness, ingratitude, and in-

justice. Not one of these sufferings was spared to our Saviour. "I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people."

Consider further the full measure of punishment and suffering demanded and exacted by the incomprehensible justice of God in satisfaction for the sins of the world. At the time of the flood what a wonderful volume of water must have swept over the face of the earth, when springs rose up as torrents, and rivers and seas overflowed their beds, and the very flood-gates of heaven itself were opened. Such a cataclysm broke over the soul of Jesus Christ when He accepted voluntarily in His own person the whole guilt of all the malice of the sins of the world, offering Himself in expiation to the divine justice. "You are bought at a great price"—the price of the precious blood, one single drop of which would have sufficed to ransom a thousand worlds, but shed for us in such an agony of pain and suffering as is beyond the power of any created mind to understand or realize. Our Saviour suffered for us gladly: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; how I am straitened until it be accomplished." Oh, how glorious, how radiant, how blood-red is the crown of the Saviour of the world, the delight of heaven, the joy of the elect! "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and benediction." This is the cry of the blessed in heaven. Shall we for whom this Lamb gave Its life not love and honor It; is there among men one

to be found so rash, so unthankful, so insolent as to stretch out his hand to despoil His Saviour of His crown? Yet, it is so; those very souls for whom He shed His blood dare to treat Him with base ingratitude; although they know for whom, and why and how He offered Himself, they continue to commit grievous sin, thus, as far as they can, setting at naught the work of the Redemption. They have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb, but they return to grovel in the foulness of sin, and renew, to the best of their power, the sufferings of Jesus Christ. They have been forgiven through the merits of their Saviour, and they offend again; they rise up, and fall again; fall and rise up again, making no account of sin, and turning the passion of Our Lord into a mockery. What ingratitude, what disloyalty, what hardness of heart!

Let us finally glance at the wonderful glory due to God from His joint title of Creator and Redeemer. What incomprehensible temerity, boundless ingratitude, and contemptible disloyalty does a sinner display when he grievously offends Him who unites two such crowns! Is there any corner of the earth into which he can creep, to hide himself from the offended majesty of His Creator and Redeemer? Can a penance be found severe enough to atone for his wicked action? Can he ever hope to wash away with burning tears the guilt of it, or form resolutions strong enough to avoid it in the future?

Eternal God, our Creator and Redeemer, who hast done so much for us, do not forsake us, but

grant to all who sin the grace of heartfelt sorrow, true penance and earnest purpose of amendment. "Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy." Yes, according to that mercy which surpasses even Thy power and majesty. Amen.

SERMON XLVIII

On Sin as an Offense Against God

"I have done evil before Thee" (*Ps.* l. 6).

All sin, and mortal sin in particular, is an offense against God. In order to form some estimate of its gravity we endeavored last Sunday to answer the question: "Who is it that is offended by sin?" We saw that it was God, the eternal King, to whom belongs the double crown of Creator and Redeemer of the world. The full temerity, ingratitude, and disloyalty of every mortal sin in this way becomes evident, but we shall be enabled to realize its true significance still more vividly if we consider:

I. Who commits the offense.
II. How it is committed.
III. Why it is committed.

Let us implore the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and make our meditation in honor of the passion of Jesus Christ.

I

By whom is the offense committed? The seriousness of an offense is aggravated when offered by any one very low in the social scale. What we would submit to from those who are above us or on an equality with us, we would by no means suffer from one beneath us. If a little gnat annoys us we destroy it without further ado, be-

cause we judge that so insignificant a creature, if in the smallest degree vexatious to man, may be lawfully exterminated. Now take a look round. We have already seen that He who is offended by sin is the thrice-holy God who reigns over the world in the double right of Creator and Redeemer. And who is it that offends Him? It is we poor human creatures. What is each one of us individually compared to the number of people in this city? Absolutely insignificant; a man more or less scarcely makes any difference. And what is one man among the myriads that inhabit the earth? Not as much as a drop in a pail of water. But compared to the legions of angels in heaven what is he? A mere worm of the earth. And now look at him in contrast to God Almighty, before whom all things that exist appear as nothing, and who could by a thought, a sign, a word, annihilate the entire universe. In presence of such a God what, then, is a sinner? If we state the bare truth we are bound to admit that he is a creature whom, having no need of him, God created out of nothing, although it was in His power to create thousands of other and better men; a creature that, apart from God, is and has nothing, and must thank his Maker for all that he possesses; one for whom, if Christ had not redeemed him, it would have been better never to have been born, and who, if God were to refuse him His forgiveness, would have nothing more to hope for; who in sinning is worse than nothing, for in a state of nothingness at all events he would not have power to offend God. Woe to us, then, that we have dared to rise up in open rebellion against the

throne of God, the Creator, Maintainer, Ruler, Saviour of the world, and King of the whole universe, venturing with full knowledge and free choice to transgress His commands. Whoever wants to have a clear idea of the malice of sin must endeavor to realize the height of the majesty of God, and the depth of the sinner's degradation.

II

To penetrate yet more deeply into the nature of sin we will consider the manner in which it is committed. It is more offensive to any of us to hear an insulting word spoken openly to our face, than to have it whispered behind our back. How is the insult to God, contained in sin, conveyed to Him? It is expressed and can be expressed in no other way than openly to His face, for we are constantly in His sacred presence. Is there a Christian who does not believe in the omnipresence of God? What a direct insult to Him is sin, by which we are not ashamed and not afraid to think, speak, and act as we would not dream of doing before any person of our acquaintance who was worthy of respect: "To Thee only have I sinned and have done evil in Thy sight." Yes, every sinner must say with the prophet David, "I have done evil in Thy sight." "I am the judge and the witness, saith the Lord." By His omnipresence He is a witness who sees and knows all things, forgetting nothing; but He is judge also. Where should we find a criminal who had the temerity openly to insult his judge? And yet this is what the sinner does; when he commits sin he offends a judge who has power to condemn him

on the instant, giving him no time for repentance; a judge before whom he will in any case eventually appear. These truths are simple facts which, without denying our faith, we can not call in question. We all know and believe these things, and yet we are not impressed with those feelings of shame and fear which they ought to excite in us toward sin; so little indeed do they take hold of the sinner that he laughs at his sin, boasting, in the words which Holy Scripture puts into the mouth of the godless, "I have sinned and what harm hath befallen." Oh, the contempt of God, the want of appreciation of His omniscience, His omnipresence, His holiness, His justice, which is manifested in every sin!

III

When an offense has been committed we usually try to discover the motive at the root of it; whether it be envy, hatred, revenge, selfishness, or pride. The baser the motive the deeper the outrage. Eve sinned grievously in Paradise, her motive being to become through sin like to God, knowing good and evil. She hoped to attain a great good, and was led by the treachery and deceit of the serpent to desire the impossible. Even had it been possible to attain to this pinnacle of knowledge through sin, she would not have been justified in committing it; but one can at all events say that she sinned from an exalted motive; she wished to attain something great. The sin of Judas had a much more shameful and disgraceful object. He was guilty of the grievous crime of betraying his Master, and he accom-

plished his end by the most despicable means, namely, by a treacherous kiss. But still more contemptible were his motives—a paltry sum of money, thirty pieces of silver—the gratification of the passion of avarice. Let us remember these two types and ask ourselves by what kind of motive our sins are instigated. God Himself said of the Israelites: "They violated Me among My own people for a handful of barley, and a piece of bread" (*Ezech.* xiii. 19). Could we not apply these words to-day to ourselves and our own transgressions? Men without taking the least thought offend God grievously for the sake of some trifling gratification of less value than a handful of barley, and more unsubstantial than a piece of bread. Are there not Christians who deceive and cheat others or perjure themselves for the sake of even smaller gain than the thirty pieces of silver demanded by Judas?

Sin is an offense against God; mortal sin is a grievous offense against God, and everywhere we turn we are met with this mystery of evil. Who is it that is offended? The Most High whose Majesty not even the minds of the greatest spirits can apprehend. Who is it that offends Him? The lowest of His creatures. How do they offend Him? Openly, to His very face. Why do they offend Him? From motives so base that none more contemptible could be found: "Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God." Yes, Lord, we know it, and see it; we admit it and are convinced of it. But we must not stop there; we must go further and repent of our sins and hate them

with our whole heart. We can never sorrow for them sufficiently, for sin is a perfect mystery of evil; a mystery quite as impenetrable as the greatness of God, that eternal, most sublime, and unfathomable of all mysteries. Amen.

SERMON XLIX

On the Punishment of the Fallen Angels

"God spared not the angels that sinned" (2 *Peter* ii. 4).

THE subject-matter of all these instructions on sin may be divided by two simple questions: (1) What is the attitude of the sinner toward God? (2) What is God's attitude toward the sinner? The first of these we have already answered: mortal sin is a deliberate turning away from God. We have tried to measure the evil of such a rebellion by seeking to know Who it is that is offended by mortal sin, who it is that offends, how and why he offends.

We now pass on to the consideration of our second point: What is God's attitude toward the sinner? We can better define the question by asking how does God regard the sinner, and how does He show it in His words and by His actions? We get two very different answers according as God Almighty is dealing with a repentant or an unrepentant sinner, and desires to manifest His mercy or His justice.

But we must not lose sight of our primary object. We are considering sin in order to conceive a horror of it. To attain this end it would be appropriate to contemplate God in the exercise of His justice to the unrepentant sinner.

How, then, does the justice of God deal with mortal sin? God in His justice punishes mortal sin with such severity, and often so suddenly and

relentlessly, as to surpass all our preconceived ideas on the subject. We will draw our first proof of this from the punishment of the fallen angels, considering, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and in honor of the passion of Our Saviour:

I. Their sin.
II. Their justification.
III. Their condemnation.

We are told that in the beginning God created countless numbers of angelic spirits, who after their creation were required to pass through a state of trial, like to that of our first parents in Paradise, by which they were to give evidence of their loyalty and obedience to God. It is further related that a very large number of these spirits fell away. In the Apocalypse their fall is represented by a great battle waged against the Almighty and the good angels by Lucifer and his allies. "And there was a great battle in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven" (*Apoc.* xii. 7, 8). It is also generally accepted that they were guilty of a very grievous sin of pride, though theologians differ as to the form it actually took. According to St. Bonaventure the first part of their sin consisted in the arrogance with which the fallen angels believed themselves to be wonderful, and capable of doing and accomplishing great things. The second step was overweening pride which made them wish to rise higher than God destined them to be.

This might have come about in two ways, either by desiring to attain their end, not for the honor and glory of God, but for their own purposes; or by desiring to attain it, not at God's appointed time, or with the help of His grace, but of their own strength and power. Then came the completion of their sin, the voluntary turning away from God. The mind could accomplish these three operations almost simultaneously; it was a sin of thought.

Some divines give the following explanation of the sin of the fallen angels. They say that God Almighty made known the mystery of the Incarnation to the heavenly choirs, telling them that the Son of God made man would take a higher place in heaven than all the angelic choirs, who would be called upon to adore Him. The pride of Lucifer could not bear to see human nature exalted so far above him; he became envious and, rebelling against God, would not consent to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ who was to come. Many among the spirits joined themselves to him, and participating in his sin were punished with him. "God spared not the angels that sinned." Before we turn to contemplate their punishment let us consider what justification, humanly speaking, can be offered in their defense.

II

We will go back to that moment so many ages ago, when immediately after the sin of the fallen angels the arm of the divine justice was outstretched to cast them into the eternal abyss. Let us picture at the same instant one of the faith-

ful angels kneeling on the lowest step of the throne of the Most High, and endeavoring in the name of all his companions to justify his unhappy brethren in the sight of God. What would he have to advance on their behalf? Let us fancy him speaking as we ourselves would have done had we been charged to advocate their cause.

First he would have pointed to the sublime nature of these fallen creatures of God: O God, I admit that they have sinned and sinned grievously! No one can deny that they have deserved Thy punishments. But consider, O Lord, who they are on whom Thou art about to wreak Thy vengeance. They are the first work of Thy hands, the masterpiece of Thy omnipotence, illumined by the light of understanding, adorned with Thy gifts, the brightest stars of the spiritual world, and once the objects of Thy special predilection. Have mercy upon them. Another thought should move Thee to have compassion on them. It is true they are deserving of Thy anger, but think of their great number. What multitudes of angels have sinned! If they are all to be banished Thy heaven will be left empty. Punish a few among them, the ringleaders, the instigators, Lucifer himself, but spare the rest. Far be it from me to minimize the guilt of their sin. But surely Thy holy and all-seeing eye can discover some ground, however slight, for excusing and pardoning them. They sinned only in thought. "Only in thought it is true. But the thought was one of rebellion against Me." Yes, Lord, their sin was a grievous one, but they accomplished nothing by it. They

sinned only once and it was for the first time. No one had as yet offended against Thee; therefore, they had no example of Thy terrible and incomprehensible justice before their eyes to deter them. Spare them, O Lord, or, if Thou wilt not consent to spare them, at least delay the sentence and allow them time for sorrow and penance. Remember they are our brothers. But if such considerations will not move Thee to alter Thy decrees, turn, O Lord, to the thought of what results Thy forgiveness would work. How deep a sorrow for their sin would well up in their hearts if Thou wouldst but grant them Thy pardon! What gratitude they would pour out for all eternity! How loyally they would serve Thee, loving Thee even more on account of Thy mercy toward them, than for the gift of creation! On the other hand, what will follow upon Thy condemnation? They will become hardened in sin and will blaspheme Thee for all eternity, striving to the best of their power to draw others into sin that they may be lost with them. O Lord, grant them Thy merciful forgiveness and opportunities for sorrow and repentance.

If such grounds of defense as these occur even to our feeble intelligence, we may be sure they were present also with even more forcible arguments to the superior minds of the angels who were capable of urging them with much greater eloquence than ours. But either none of the good angels ventured to speak in this way, or the Almighty refused to listen to them. At all events, their petition was not granted.

III

What was the punishment of the fallen angels? God knew, better than men or all the inhabitants of heaven could tell Him, who among the angels had rebelled, their number, and the cause of their rebellion, and so great was His horror of sin that He immediately cast them all, without exception, into the abyss of hell. The punishment followed so quickly on the crime that not the smallest loophole for sorrow, penance, or conversion was allowed them. Our Saviour Himself said: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven." Retribution swift, strong, and eternal overtook them. God did not spare them but "delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes, to the lower hell, unto torments."

How much is there for us to learn from the incomprehensible justice of God manifested for the first time at the fall of the rebellious angels? We are bound to believe that to be thus cast into hell was but what was due to their sin. Most certainly, you say, but how does that concern us? It concerns us very much. How can we continue to look upon the commission of even one single sin as of little matter, when we realize that countless legions of angels are at present in hell for no more. You reply, Oh, they were angels, we are but men. St. Bernard speaks very differently; he says: "If God was not willing to spare the fallen angels, how much less will He spare thee who art but worms and corruption. Having sinned only once they immediately fell victims to God's justice; how much more do we deserve to incur His most severe penalties who have sinned not

once, but more often than there are hairs on our head." The angels were not vouchsafed the grace of conversion, yet the full rigor of punishment was meted out to them. How justly, then, are those swallowed up in hell who, having been forgiven not once but innumerable times, continue steadily to abuse God's grace, outraging not only His justice, but His love and mercy! His infinite mercy, as well as His infinite justice, requires that such men should be punished.

O my God, if it was just that the angels who had no examples of Thy justice before their eyes to deter them, and who had never received Thy forgiveness, should be punished as they were, with how much more right shall Thy vengeance fall on unrepentant men, who believe in hell, to whom the grace of conversion has been offered, who have been forgiven, and for whom Christ has suffered and died! What shadow of excuse, what grounds of defence, however slight, can be found for such as these? Nothing remains to them but their malice and sin; nothing awaits them but the punishments of the divine justice; they can only cry: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right."

May our hearts be filled with the fear of God, with a deep horror of hell, with respect for the divine judgments, and with a sincere desire to avoid grievous sin in the future. Amen.

SERMON L

On the Punishment of Sin

(OUR FIRST PARENTS)

"In what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt die the death" (*Gen.* ii. 17).

LAST Sunday we endeavored, by considering the prompt, terrible, and eternal nature of the punishment inflicted on all the fallen angels without exception, to realize the attitude of the Almighty toward mortal sin. In order that it may be still more deeply impressed upon our minds we will to-day contemplate how God dealt with the sin of the first man, Adam. Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and in honor of Our Lord's passion, let us consider:

I. Adam's high estate.
II. The depth of his fall.
III. The severity of his punishment.

I

The high estate to which the first man was created is expressed by God's own words to him when the making of the material world was completed, and before Adam had sinned: "Rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth" (*Gen.* i. 28). Adam was to be a ruler, a king, and he was equipped by God bodily as well as spiritually for his kingly office. When the Israelites

chose their first king they selected Saul, a man conspicuous for his great size and personal beauty, probably also distinguished for bravery and power of intellect. It is not likely that the Almighty would have denied to Adam, whom he appointed king of the whole earthly creation, any quality necessary to adorn such a high position. He certainly gave him health, strength, and beauty of body, while at the same time granting him faculties of mind of the highest order. The Book of Ecclesiasticus says: "He filled them with the knowledge of understanding" (*Ecclus.* xvii. 5). In addition to these natural qualities God endowed Adam very richly in the supernatural order, giving him an extraordinary measure of sanctifying grace; bestowing on him the gifts of the Holy Ghost which are the fruits of grace, and making his body immortal.

God not only equipped Adam in every way for his position, He also formally installed him in it. He was in the fullest sense of the word "king by the grace of God," appointed by God Himself to be the head and representative of mankind and of the whole visible world.

And of what magnitude was his kingdom. Until Adam sinned, all the elements obeyed him. Now they are often in a tumult and man has much to fear from their unruliness. Water with its floods and risings; air with its storms and hurricanes; shocks of earthquake, outbreaks of fire, are all menaces of danger to him. Formerly nature was subject and submissive to Adam. In the same way with regard to animals. Now bridle and whip must be used to tame them, and by

means of chain and bit we force them to obey us. In their wild condition they either fly as though we were their greatest enemy, or they attack and threaten us, fiercely striving to make us victims of their savage instincts. Before the fall the animals were Adam's good and loyal subjects. Not only did his jurisdiction extend over the whole earth, it went yet further. He had complete mastery over all the lower instincts of the spirit and of the flesh, so that those temptations which are such a constant source of difficulty to us, even embittering the lives of many of us, could not arise in him against his will. His body was obedient to his soul; all things acknowledged him as their ruler, and he acted in perfect submission to God. It was a beautifully and perfectly ordered kingdom.

How long was such a state of things to last. As long as Adam remained sinless he was immortal, and he would have exercised his functions of ruler until he attained the crowning gift of everlasting life; moreover, his kingdom could not be lost to him except by the act of his own free will. The sharpest thorn in the sides of earthly kings in the midst of all their glory is that, however mighty they may be, the power of a throne is unstable and is liable to be overturned by ministers, or enemies, or subjects, or even by their own children. Even when such a calamity does not actually befall them there is always the possibility of it; moreover kings, like the lowest of their subjects, must die, and have rightly been compared to stage representatives of royalty. Some poor actor is for a few hours dressed as a king, but when the

play is ended the royal garments are laid aside, and like his fellow-actors he must leave the scene of his triumphs. But Adam had no such trial to look forward to. As long as he remained faithful to God his kingdom could have no end.

What a mighty and exalted monarch! Appointed by God to a kingdom, which, unlimited in its duration, extended externally over the whole earth, and internally over every power and faculty of his soul and body, which were endowed with immortality. The king himself alone was powerful enough to destroy this mighty empire, and this is what Adam in fact did when he committed sin.

II

We will now consider the depth of Adam's fall. God gave to our first parents one single commandment, easy of observance; they were told to abstain from the fruit of one single tree only; but obedience to this command was strictly enjoined on them: "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt die the death"; in other words, they would lose the quality of immortality and become mortal.

God allowed the evil spirit to tempt them. Satan, under the guise of a serpent, addressed himself to Eve as the weaker vessel, and said: "You shall not die the death." He lured her on by means of false promises: "You shall be as God." The wish to be like God, which had been the stumbling block in his own path, he made use of to lead men to their fall. He ascribed to God the faults he had been guilty of himself, repre-

senting that the Almighty had tried to terrorize His creatures by means of vain threats, because He had jealous fears of their becoming like to Himself. He swore to what was false: "For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof your eyes shall be opened." Eve listened and believed, took the fruit and ate, and gave it to Adam. Adam could not bear to deny Eve her slightest wish; he did not want to separate his fate from hers; he saw that she had eaten the apple and had not died; so he took it and ate also. The great king of the earth rebelled against the mighty King of heaven; he sinned.

Before going on to consider the punishment due to this sin, let us see what was the cause of Adam's fall. It was not sensuality, for no carnal desire had power to assail him against his will; neither was he impelled to do wrong by the claims of pressing necessity, for the fruit of all the trees in the garden of paradise was at his disposal; he had formed no evil habit and was filled with an abundance of grace. One could not say of a king, so splendidly qualified and fitted for his position, that he had failed through weakness or ignorance. What, then, led to his sin? It is impossible for us to say. One thing only we have to realize in this connection, and it is this: If Adam, living in sanctifying grace and in the friendship of God, king of the world and head of all mankind, was overcome in so disgraceful a way by the first temptation that came to him, how much reason is there for us, if we want to avoid grievous sin, to be watchful, and to walk circumspectly, and humbly, in the sight of God!

III

We will now turn our thoughts to the punishment inflicted by God on Adam and his descendants.

He was deprived of his royal dignity. As soon as he had sinned the body and all its members rose up in rebellion against the soul, refusing them the obedience which up to that time they had so willingly given. "They perceived themselves to be naked"—Adam and Eve were obliged to leave the garden of Paradise and all its delights, with the full realization that they had lost it by their own fault, and would never enter it again. What a painful thing it is to have to say good-bye to a dear old home!

Adam's reign was over. From henceforth our first parents were exposed to the heat of summer and the cold of winter; they had to bear the variableness of the weather and endure wind, storm, and rain. The animals on the one hand fled from them, and on the other hand were a menace to them. Labor and toil became their portion: "Cursed is the earth in thy work . . . thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken" (*Gen.* iii. 17-19). Nearly a thousand years elapsed before Adam died and returned to dust; for so long a time he was condemned to earn and eat his bread in labor and toil, and his children and descendants are still suffering to-day for the first sin. "A heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam." Since the beginning of the world how hard men have had to work in field and wood, on

land and water, in work-shop and factory, on the earth and under it, in pits and mines, from morning till evening, by day and night, from youth to old age! Their sweat has run down, turning their bread sour and bitter, and all in punishment of the first sin.

The children of Adam were not born into this world in innocence, but with the stain of sin upon them and with inclinations to evil. Cain in killing his brother Abel committed the first murder, and caused the first death; the world for the first time contained a murderer and looked upon a corpse. What grief was thus occasioned in Adam's household, Eve weeping more bitterly over the body of her son than when downcast and ashamed she was turned out of paradise! Since then what a torrent of tears have been shed by the children of men, tears poured out in pain and grief, fear and anxiety, repentance and shame, and under every emotion and feeling by which the human heart is capable of being stirred, till together they would form a perfect ocean of sorrow. And all in punishment of the first sin!

Abel was the first to die. Numbers of men since him have suffered death; how many have still to pay the universal penalty! "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned." Death with the bitterness, the fears, the suffering it entails is the primary punishment of sin; dissolution is always terrible for the one who dies, sad and sorrowful for those whom he leaves behind. Now think of the aggregate number of deaths that takes place, and will continue

to take place to the end of time in each country, in towns, villages, and houses, upon battlefields, in hospitals, amongst young and old, those who are in health as well as those who are sick: "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt die the death."

How great is the holiness and the justice of God! All the labor and toil on the earth, the tears of the whole world, the bitter desolation which follows everywhere upon the ravages of death, all the sufferings of the children of Adam, can not adequately atone for that single sin of their first parents. What, then, will each individual sinner, who must bear alone the punishment of his many sins, be called upon to endure! The whole of eternity will hardly afford him time enough to suffer. O God, we adore Thy justice. Grant us to live in fear of sin, thinking of the suffering it would bring upon us. When we have fallen, may we at once endeavor by contrition and confession to wipe out our offense, for "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Our aim will be by lifelong penance, hard work, self-denial, and patient suffering to make atonement to Thy divine justice even for those sins whose guilt Thou hast forgiven. "Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy great mercy. Amen.

SERMON LI

On the Punishment of Sin

(THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS)

"I am tormented in this flame" (*Luke* xvi. 24).

WE HAVE tried to form some estimate of God's hatred of sin by considering the punishments which He inflicted on the fallen angels, and on our first parents, as well as all their descendants. But if we want to understand still more thoroughly God's attitude toward sin we must consider what He reserves in the next world for the unrepentant, namely, the punishment of hell. Our Saviour has Himself, in a few striking words, described it to us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. "And the rich man also died and was buried in hell." Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in union with the sufferings of Christ, we will consider:

I. Why the rich man was buried in hell.
II. What sufferings he had to endure there.

I

Why was the rich man buried in hell? Solely on account of his sins, which, since we know he went to hell, must have been of a grievous nature. In what did these sins consist? Our Lord having described the punishment we should naturally expect Him to go on to tell us what the offenses had been. What does He say? Our

Saviour speaks merely of "a certain rich man." It is not represented that his riches were unjustly acquired by fraud, or oppression of the poor. Neither are we told that he spent his money in giving himself up to excess of any kind, debauchery, or great extravagance. Riches, though a danger, are no sin. We read further that he was "clothed in purple and fine linen"; but his sin did not lie here, for it has been the custom in all ages for the rich to dress better than the poor. Though he "feasted sumptuously every day" our Saviour does not charge him with excess at these banquets, or with lending himself to indecent conversation, or with showing disrespect for religion. No such thing is mentioned. It is simply stated that he dressed richly and kept a good table. He lived for this life, he was a man of the world, and as things go here below he was even a man of honor. There seems to be as yet no reason why he should be cast into hell; if it was his worldly, luxurious, sensual life that led to it, how many more there are in our own day who will merit to be swallowed up in its flames? His sin seems to me to lie in quite a different direction. "There was a certain beggar named Lazarus who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him." Here we have the reason why the rich man was buried in hell, because he neglected to look after the poor; he sinned by omission. He was rich; he knew the poor man well, passing him every day as he drove in and out. He could so easily have helped him, the crumbs from his table would

have sufficed; but whether from pride or avarice, carelessness or hardness of heart, he did not do so. He left undone what was a sacred duty, and this, at least so it seems to me, was the cause of his condemnation. Now, let us ask ourselves, if the rich man was so punished for neglecting to relieve the necessities of the poor, what will be the fate of usurers, those who enrich themselves at the expense of their poorer brethren? How will adulterers, corrupters of youth, revilers of religion, blasphemers against God, be judged? If the rich man on account of his sin was "buried in hell" we may well wonder how deep down into the recesses of the abyss shall they be plunged who are practised in every form of mortal sin, and who have wallowed in its foulness and corruption.

II

But let the sin of the rich man be what it may; there is no doubt he sinned and sinned grievously, and we have the Saviour's word for it that he went to hell. Our Lord describes his punishment in its every part.

(a) In his torment the rich man lifted up his eyes and "saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom." The realization of the joy of the blessed in heaven, even though they do not behold it with their bodily eyes, must no doubt constitute a large part of the sufferings of the damned. Their first feeling on thinking of that happiness which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, must be one of the most bitter envy. Envy is always the more bitter, in

proportion as the good which others enjoy, but which we are called upon to forego, is great and desirable. One of the Fathers of the Church has even asserted that the happiness of heaven is a greater torture to the lost souls than the flames of hell itself. The closer our relations to those we envy, the more this passion devours us. Oh, what must the souls in hell experience when they raise their eyes and their thoughts to the blessed in heaven, who, in peace and security and ineffable delight, rest upon the heart of God! Look! There we see souls whose lives were spent in the same circumstances as our own; our fellow-countrymen, our fellow-citizens, of the same faith, the same age as ourselves; our school companions, brought up as we were, frequenting the same church, receiving the same sacraments, the same graces—perhaps even they were less generously treated in this respect than we were. And yet now they have entered into the enjoyment of unspeakable happiness, while we are plunged in such a depth of misery that human eyes can not picture it, nor the tongue describe it, neither can any human heart imagine its tortures. Oh, what an agony of envy we suffer at the sight of that happiness which can never end, but which is irretrievably lost to us for all eternity!

The second torturing thought which pierces the soul of the inhabitants of hell, when they think of the happiness of heaven, is the question why they too did not attain it. Yes, why? Why is such a one in heaven? Why are we in hell? *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* Here we

have the worm that never dies. They are forced to say to themselves, admitting the truth of it, "through my fault, through my fault, through my own most grievous fault. Did I not know that sin offended God who punishes the sinner with the pains of hell? I knew it, and believed it, and yet I sinned. It was open to me to avoid sin and yet I did not do so; I might have repented and been converted, but I would not; and now it is too late, and I am imprisoned forever in this place of eternal punishment. What blindness, what foolishness, what madness. A word of self-accusation, a moment of sorrow would have saved me, but now it is too late!" Such are the whisperings of conscience; such the bitter words of self-reproach which are drowned only by the vehemence and fury of the blasphemies uttered against the justice of God, against the saints in glory, against themselves in their misery. If hell contained no more dreadful punishment than envy of the happiness of the blessed, and the terrible torment of self-reproach, it would still be in truth a place of torture.

(b) The rich man in hell called out to Abraham: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Note well, that our Saviour is showing us a soul lost in hell; he is allowing him to make his sad and suffering state known. And what does he say? "I am tormented in this flame." It may not be the flame of fire such as we understand it; it may be of a different kind from ours, but fire of some sort it certainly is,

real torturing fire, kindled and kept alight by the justice of God. Electric light is different from gas light, or from the light given by oil lamps, or the light of the sun; but, nevertheless, it is real, genuine light and is even the most brilliant in its effects. It was our Saviour's wish that we should think of the lost souls in hell as existing in an atmosphere of fire—fire above them, under them, around them, and within them, wrapping them round like a garment. "I am tormented in this flame."

It is a fire that never slackens. The rich man begged that Lazarus might dip, not his hand, nor even his finger, but only the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. But not even this alleviation was allowed him. For all eternity he may cry: "I am tormented in this flame."

(c) The culminating horror of hell is the fact that it is eternal. Father Abraham speaks as follows to the unhappy Dives: "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you can not, nor any from thence come hither." As long as the blessed remain in heaven so long will the lost be detained in hell. There is no connecting link between them; the chasm is too great ever to be bridged over. The worm dieth not, the fire is never slackened, hell is eternal. What unutterable torment lies in the thought that there can be no change, no alleviation, no end. For all eternity! Here on earth when winter comes we look forward to spring; on a journey we long to reach our destination; an invalid hopes for recovery, a worker is upheld through the fatigues of

the day by the thought of the evening rest; when all hope in life is at an end, then we look for death. We continually seek to find in our thoughts fresh food with which to feed the aspirations of our heart and so enable them to live and grow. The wanderer in the desert, surrounded on all sides by immense tracts of sand, searches round anxiously for some object—a sand heap, a tree, even a camel's back on which his eye may rest; through the darkness of the night his gaze traverses the immense vaults of the sky, and singles out one or other of the heavenly constellations. So the thoughts of the damned rush forward through the years and the centuries, hoping in the far, far, distant future to see an end to their suffering. But they look forward in vain; there will be no end! So long as heaven endures hell will endure; so long as the immortal soul lives it must remain in hell, suffering in punishment for sin for which no atonement is possible; so long as the justice of God lives the punishment of the lost souls will continue.

It is a frightful and a terrible thing to think that God punishes the sinner so grievously in an eternal hell. But if the mere thought of hell is so fearful, what must the reality be! If hell is so terrible, how abhorrent must mortal sin be to God Almighty! A perfect mystery of evil. The thought of hell is not only fearful; it is highly salutary as well, and is well calculated to strengthen us in temptation, to deter us from sin, to lead us to sorrow and penance for our past offenses. For to believe in hell is to fear it, and to avoid falling into it means gaining entrance to

heaven. Few things have more power to keep us steadfast in the service of God than the realization of the incomprehensible justice with which His enemies are punished in hell. "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (*Ecclus.* vii. 40). Hell is as great a proof of the divine goodness, as of the divine justice. St. Thomas divides those who go to hell into two classes: unbelievers, to whom hell was revealed, but who refused to believe in it, and fools, who believed in it, but did not sufficiently fear it. None of those here present belong to the unbelieving class; let us not join the ranks of the fools who believe without fearing. Amen.

SERMON LII

On the Punishment of Sin

(CHRIST UPON THE CROSS)

"He spared not even His own Son" (*Rom.* viii. 32).
"Christ died for our sins" (1 *Cor.* xv. 3).

IF WE want to know and understand fundamentally the great evil of mortal sin, we must not content ourselves with considering the punishment of the fallen angels and of our first parents, nor merely with trying to estimate the horrors of hell; we must before everything keep before our eyes the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What has sin to do with the sufferings of Christ, or the death of Christ with mortal sin? A great deal, dearly beloved brethren. There is a very close and many-sided connection between the sins of mankind on the one hand, and the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ on the other. What constitutes this connection?

I. Our sins are the cause of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

II. The sufferings and death of Christ are the satisfaction and atonement for our sins.

At the foot of the crucifix and in honor of the passion of our divine Saviour, let us devoutly give ourselves up to the consideration of these two points.

I

The sins of the whole of mankind are the cause of the sufferings and death of Christ. This proposition is literally true, and is one of the principal doctrines of the Catholic faith. It is important and highly salutary for us to have a clear idea of its meaning. The death of our Saviour was brought about by a long chain of causes, and it is our present object to ascertain which of them was the greatest, the principal, the ultimate cause.

When we begin to inquire into the *immediate* causes of Our Lord's death, we at once think of the bloody scourges, the sharp thorns, the nails, the hammer, the cross, the spear. Yet these are but innocent causes, mere instruments in the hands of men, which, unless guided by their cruelty, would have been powerless to inflict any injury on the Lord of all things. Next we have as a cause the brutal executioners and soldiery; but here again, who allowed these monsters to torture and kill our Saviour? Pilate gave the order, which the hatred and envy of the Jews demanded; he may assert his innocence a thousand times over, the death of Jesus Christ will still be justly laid at his door. But the high-priests and the Jews themselves are even more to blame for it, because it was by their complaints and threats, by the outcry they made, that Pilate was overcome. They may, indeed, be called the true murderers of Jesus Christ: "His blood be upon us."

But this is not all. Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and it is certain that none of the causes which we have enumerated would have had any power over Him if he had not Himself wished

and permitted it. At the beginning of His passion a word from His lips made the servants and soldiers fall to the ground, but He allowed them to rise up again. He suffered voluntarily, and this being so we must seek in Himself, in His own most sacred Heart, for a cause, a motive, that could have induced Him to take upon Himself so much and such terrible suffering. What could it have been? It was His infinite mercy and pity, His unspeakable love for us. If He had not loved us He would not have suffered for us.

But we have not yet arrived at the primary cause of His sufferings. Why did His love move Him so to suffer? Because suffering alone could open to us the gates of eternal life, and save us from the abyss of eternal destruction. But for what reason was this the only way by which we could be saved? It is to be found partly in the justice of God, which demanded this satisfaction; but finally and fundamentally in the sins of men who owed this reparation to the Almighty, but who were powerless to make it. The sins of men then, our sins, the sins of all mankind, are the final and most powerful link in the chain of causes which led to the death of Christ. Without sin there would have been no reason for rendering satisfaction, and the malice of men, the instruments of the passion, could have had no power over the Saviour; He would not have become man. He came on earth to suffer for us; our sins and His sufferings are the extreme ends of the chain. Sin is the great and primary cause; His death is the final effect.

St. Paul in his epistles tells us repeatedly that

Christ died for us, that He died for our sins, and not only for our sins, but for those of the whole world. The sins of the world are the cause of the death and sufferings of Christ. Only through the sufferings of Christ could we obtain forgiveness. It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should suffer to free us from our sins.

Why must there necessarily be a connection between our sins and the sufferings of Jesus Christ? Because the justice of God required complete satisfaction for the offense offered to Him; satisfaction great enough to atone for the wrong done Him. Now, satisfaction can only be asked when there has been an offense. The person offended has the right not only to demand it, but also to determine what form it shall take, and when and by whom it shall be offered. It is for him who has committed the offense to make the required reparation which necessarily bears some proportion to the magnitude of the offense. Now let us apply these principles to our own case. Who is here the person offended? The infinite majesty of God. Who is the offender? The sinner, one of God's creatures, the work of His hands. Of how many offenses has he been guilty? Their number is countless. Who, then, is it that demands satisfaction? The just God, and He demands a satisfaction in proportion to the offense and the guilt of the offender, for it is only through His infinite mercy that reparation avails at all. Neither man, nor angel, nor any creature could afford the necessary satisfaction; the Son of God alone can atone for our sins by His sufferings, and He became man to live and suffer and die for

us. Oh, look well at the crucified Saviour! We have all good reason to kneel down devoutly before our crucifix and say humbly and sorrowfully: O my crucified Saviour, how much and how bitterly Thou hast suffered! Thou hast suffered for me, the innocent for the guilty, the Son of God for a sinful man; Thou hast suffered through me, my crimes have been the cause of Thy sufferings. What justice, what love, what mercy! Where in the whole world can I learn better than at the foot of the cross the extent of the malice of sin, the rigor of God's justice, the depth of Thy love? Where can I better deplore my sins? I will say with St. Paul: "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me."

II

Our sins are the cause of the sufferings of Christ; this is one tie binding them to the sufferings of our Saviour; the second tie that joins them together is, that the sufferings of the Saviour form the punishment, the reparation, the satisfaction for our sins.

The satisfaction Christ offered was vicarious. Because we poor human creatures were not capable of rendering it ourselves He took our place, Jesus Christ the Son of God, at the same time God and man; our brother, one of our race, the new Adam pure and without spot, the only-begotten Son of the Father. There is no doubt His qualifications for the work of atonement were of a very special character.

The satisfaction which our Saviour offered was not only sufficient; it was perfect satisfaction. It

was perfect by reason of the person of Jesus Christ Himself by whom it was offered; one drop of His precious blood would have sufficed to redeem a thousand sinful worlds—perfect in its effects; the redemption not only obtained God's forgiveness for sin, it unlocked the full stream of His grace and opened the gates of heaven. Finally, the satisfaction offered by Christ was in itself of the most perfect kind; His sufferings were of such a nature that they were appropriate as satisfaction for all sin, and for every kind of sin.

Who would deny that He has offered satisfaction for every member of the human race? His sacred limbs were covered with blood, and formed but one wound. "From the sole of the foot to the top of the head there is no soundness therein."

Neither can we doubt that He has atoned for all sin, and for every kind of sin. Classify sin as you will, look at it from whatever side you like, and then consider the Saviour on the cross, and you will be forced to admit that He has fully satisfied. It may be useful to pursue this thought a little further.

1. Sin may be divided into sins of the spirit and sins of the flesh. Certainly Christ offered satisfaction for the sins of the flesh; we have only to consider His poor bleeding and tortured body. But He has equally atoned for sins of the spirit: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." He was filled with sadness and horror. Holy Scripture speaks of it as an agony.

2. All sin may be brought under the headings of the seven deadly sins; the Saviour has offered

satisfaction for them all. For the sins of pride: He humbled Himself in washing the feet of the disciples; He was humiliated by His enemies. Would it be possible for a man to undergo greater contempt and ignominy than to have a villain like Barabbas preferred before Him, while He Himself was nailed to the disgraceful tree of the cross? For the sins of covetousness: Look at Him; He is so poor that in His dying hour He has nowhere to lay His head. For the sins of lust: His sacred body is torn and wounded. For the sins of anger: So far are all feelings of revenge removed from Him that He prays for His executioners: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." For the sins of gluttony: What was His dying cry: "I thirst." What alleviation is offered Him? For the sins of envy and of the tongue: Listen to His enemies exulting over His life and death—"He saved others, Himself He can not save." For sins of sloth: Like a giant He ran His course, never seeking rest till He could cry, "It is finished."

3. Sin may be divided into sins of thought, word, and deed. This is a very usual division and one in current use. Our Saviour atoned for all sins of thought: Look at the crown of sharp thorns by which His sacred head was pierced. For sins of word: See His sweet and gentle mouth, with the mark of the cruel blow still imprinted on it, and disfigured with sweat and blood and by the loathsome spittle of the brutal soldiery. Which of us would dare to spit at the mouth which will pronounce judgment over life and death? And yet that is what we do by indecent speech.

He has atoned for the sins of deed: Look at His sacred hands and feet pierced through and fastened down with nails.

4. Sins are either sins of omission or of commission. Our Saviour has expiated both. While His enemies left nothing undone that could increase and intensify His sufferings His friends and disciples, on the other hand, neglected everything that could alleviate them. They could not watch with Him; they denied Him.

5. Every sin contains a turning away from God and a turning to the creature. Christ atoned for both. For the turning away from God—He was forsaken by the Father: "My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" For the turning to the creature: His own creatures turned away from Him and filled His cup of sorrow to the brim.

6. Finally, sin is divided into venial and mortal sin. He has atoned for all. For venial sin by those torments, which though costing Him unspeakable suffering, did not actually cause His death. For mortal sin when, after His three hours' agony, He bowed His head and died.

Behold how a just man dies to atone for the iniquities of the wicked; look how the life of the Innocent One is sacrificed because He took upon Himself the guilt of sinners! See, my soul, how even the Son of God Himself must die to offer satisfaction to His heavenly Father for the sins of the world. If it was necessary that the Son of God should suffer so terribly for the evil done by others, what will that punishment be which will be inflicted on the unrepentant sinner himself by the eternal justice!

Oh, my divine Saviour, I give Thee eternal and heartfelt thanks for having borne in my place the guilt of my sins; so long as I live I will sorrow for my iniquities, which fastened Thee to the cross. I will imprint the image of the crucifix deep in my soul, and keep it constantly before my eyes. I should be a monster, indeed, if I did not promise to love Thee eternally, to serve Thee constantly, and never to offend Thee. Grant that Thy precious blood may not have been shed for me in vain. Amen.

SERMON LIII

On the Seven Deadly Sins

"And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold a great red dragon having seven heads" (*Apoc.* xii. 3).

WE HAVE considered the nature of sin, and the different ways it is divided, as well as the malice and terrible consequences of mortal sin. We will now pass on to review the different kinds of sin.

There are several different kinds of sin, namely, (1) the seven deadly sins; (2) the six sins against the Holy Ghost; (3) the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance; (4) the nine ways of being accessory to another person's sin.

For to-day's instruction we will take as our subject the seven capital sins, considering, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. Their nature.
II. Their name.

I

Which are the seven deadly or capital sins? They are (1) pride, (2) covetousness, (3) lust, (4) anger, (5) gluttony, (6) envy, (7) sloth.

When one examines the nature of these capital sins it may truly be said that in one respect they are all alike, while in another respect they are all different. In what way are they all alike? They are all alike in this, that through them all there runs a striving after a real or imagined

good, whether of a material or a spiritual nature. They are all unlike because this imagined good is in each case a different one.

Pride is an inordinate desire for personal regard and distinction; covetousness for money and possessions; lust for sensual enjoyment; anger for revenge; gluttony for the pleasures of the table; envy may be described either as an excessive desire for the unhappiness of another, or excessive sadness at his well-being; sloth is the inordinate desire for rest and comfort.

Holy Scripture furnishes us with a striking picture of the seven deadly sins in the Apocalypse. The Apostle tells us "there was yet another sign in heaven, and behold a great red dragon having seven heads." There was but one dragon, one single monster. The seven deadly sins are one, in so far as they are all evil inclinations by which the infernal dragon endeavors to draw men to sin and destruction. They form the seven heads of one dragon, but they are seven different heads, for the desire of each one of the seven capital sins is directed toward a different object.

Let us consider the seven capital sins, these seven heads of the dragon, each in particular, and try to illustrate it by an example from Holy Scripture. The head in the middle, reaching up higher and looking round more boldly and more insolently than the rest, typifies pride, the unmeasured desire for honor and distinction. Lucifer fell through pride; the root of his sin lay in the desire to rise to a higher place than God had appointed for him; thus he came to rebel against the sacred majesty of the most high King:

"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High." Through pride he not only rebelled most ungratefully against his most generous master, from whom he had received everything he possessed, but he drew thousands of other sublime spirits into sin by his example; he became desperate, and dared to resist the mighty King. But destruction overtook him and he and all his following were cast into the abyss of hell. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer!" Obstinate and stiff-necked, he continues even now in hell his rebellion against God.

Side by side with this head that rears its neck in the air there is a second one groveling in the earth looking for money. This is covetousness, of which Judas is an example. This apostle felt no hatred of his divine master, neither was he envious, nor a glutton, nor a voluptuary of any kind; he was suffering under no wrong for which he wished to be revenged. What, then, induced him to commit his act of treachery? It was greed, avarice: "What will you give me and I will deliver Him unto you?" For the sake of a few paltry pieces of silver, he, one of the chosen apostles, betrayed with a kiss the innocent Lamb of God to His mortal enemies. O my God, to what terrible lengths does covetousness lead! Judas is the only soul about whom we have the certainty from Our Lord's own lips that he was lost for all eternity: "It were better for him never to have been born."

On the other side, next to pride, another of the dragon's heads stretches itself out—a head with

curious, shameless, insolent eyes. This is the image of lust. We find an illustration of this sin in the days of Noe, among those men who were his contemporaries. So universally were they given over to sins of this nature that God decided to destroy the entire human race. Noe employed nearly a hundred years in building the ark, and although he never ceased by word and example to exhort men to penance they continued in their evil courses, till they were swallowed up in the flood.

Another head has swollen veins, flashing eyes, and clenched teeth. It is anger. Anger was the sin of Esau; in his fury at finding that his brother had robbed him of his father's blessing, he cried out: "The days will come of the mourning of my father, and I will kill my brother Jacob." His first feeling was a desire for revenge, which would have plunged his father in life-long sorrow, and caused the death of his own brother. He would have satisfied this desire had his brother not fled from him.

Again we see another head red and full blooded. The open mouth seems greedy for food and drink: it is the image of gluttony. Our Saviour in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus gives us a type of a glutton. Every day the rich man feasted; food and drink occupied so much of his time and thoughts that he quite overlooked the poor beggar who lay at his gates, and neglected to give him even the crumbs that fell from his table. And what was his end? "He was buried in hell."

The last head on one side of the dragon has a

pale face and sad, sunken eyes. It is a picture of envy. Envy was the sin of Cain; He and Abel were children of the same parents and earned their bread by their daily toil. They both sacrificed to God of the fruits of their labor, but while Abel's offering was acceptable to God Cain's was not; for this reason Cain was envious of his brother: "And his countenance fell." This spiteful envy toward his brother led him to commit murder, the first murder, the awful sin of fratricide. What a cruel blow for the parents, one of whose sons was now a murderer and the other the victim of a terrible crime! From that time Cain became a fugitive on the face of the earth, despairing even of the mercy of Almighty God.

The last head on the other side of the dragon hangs down limply, showing a pair of sleepy eyes. It is sloth. This was the sin of the servant who buried his talent in the earth and returned it without profit to his master. What was the judgment passed upon him. "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

II

We have in a few strokes given seven pictures, and an equal number of examples of the seven capital sins, their nature and consequences.

It now remains for us to explain the reason of their being called capital sins. The names "capital sins" and "deadly sins" are not synonymous and the artist was wrong who illustrated these sins and wrote under his picture, "the seven

deadly sins"; he betrayed a want of knowledge of religious matters. It is possible to sin either venially or mortally in any of these seven ways, and the rules given in our instruction on mortal and venial sin hold good equally here and must be applied in each individual case.

But why are they called capital sins? The name must have some significance. They are so called because they are the source from which all other sins take their rise, just as the head is the center of all the nerves of the body and of the power of movement of our different limbs and members. They might also be called radical sins. The root of a plant lies hidden in the earth, but from it grow up stem and stalk and branch, leaf, blossom, and fruit; and these are healthy or unhealthy according to the root from which they spring. From the root of the seven capital sins a quantity of other sins grow up, a countless multitude over which we must cast a brief glance.

From *pride* spring self-satisfied thoughts, boastful words, arrogant and haughty actions, a passion for dress, contempt of others, indifference to religion.

From *covetousness:* worldly-mindedness, hardness toward the poor, cunning, deceit, usury, injustice.

From *lust:* spiritual blindness, neglect of duty, ruin of home and happiness, hardening in sin, unbelief.

From *anger:* injurious and insulting words, curses, unadvised words and deeds.

From *gluttony:* neglect of duty, loss of health,

of intelligence, and of fortune; quarreling, strife, fighting, blows, murder.

From *envy:* evil desires, dishonorable conduct, calumny, quarreling, and strife.

From *sloth:* neglect of prayer, of work, of church-going, of family, and of solicitude for salvation.

The roots are not visible, but the poisoned fruits of the seven capital sins make themselves apparent.

There is not one of us who is not obliged to admit, "I am a sinner." Conscience tells us so, and our examination of conscience reveals it; but do not let us be satisfied with merely recognizing the outward side of our sins. Let us go deeper, and discover the cause, the original root of our faults. It is not an easy thing to do. Explorers have risked health and life in finding the sources of the Nile. Let us be willing to expend care and labor to find the deepest sources of our own sins. We will make our researches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If we look persistently we shall in the end come upon one of the heads of the seven-headed dragon; then let us go to work and with the edge of our sword cut off this dragon's head, with resolutions earnestly and seriously made, and strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SERMON LIV

The Six Sins Against the Holy Ghost

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost" (*Acts* vii. 51).

We will follow up our instruction on the seven capital sins, at which we have been able to glance only very rapidly, with the consideration of yet another kind of sin, namely, the sins against the Holy Ghost.

They are called sins against the Holy Ghost because by them we resist the Holy Ghost in an especial manner and oppose His grace. When we are tired and sleepy our eyes close in spite of ourselves and we see nothing more; but we may also close them deliberately in order not to see. In the first case we do not see; in the second case we *will* not see. In the same way a drunken man walks incautiously too near the water's edge; he falls in and is drowned. Another, determined to commit suicide, throws himself in deliberately and so meets his death. The first man has been drowned, but the second wanted to be drowned. By all sin we resist, in a sense, the Holy Ghost and His grace; but by committing one of the six sins against the Holy Ghost we resist Him deliberately, knowingly, and willingly.

It is because they are so directly in opposition to the Holy Ghost and His grace that they make conversion very difficult indeed, so difficult that our Saviour once went the length of saying they

could never be forgiven. Now this must not be taken to mean that God refuses to forgive them; it is the state of feeling of the sinner himself who commits them that is opposed to desiring and seeking forgiveness. He *will not* become converted. Fire devours everything in its flames, heating, melting, consuming whatever it meets in its path. Yet if we were to lay a huge block of ice on a tiny fire the resistance it would offer to the heat would be so great that instead of the ice becoming melted it would entirely extinguish the fire.

The special characteristics common to all the sins against the Holy Ghost are, therefore, that they oppose in a direct manner the grace of the Holy Ghost, and render conversion very difficult if not impossible.

The names of these six sins are (1) presumption of God's mercy; (2) despair; (3) resisting the known truth; (4) envy at another's spiritual good; (5) obstinacy in sin; (6) final impenitence.

It is not easy to distinguish these six sins one from another, and to classify them in a simple and intelligible way; but we will attempt to divide them according to the particular form of grace to which they offer resistance.

First of all come those graces given by the Holy Spirit to our neighbor. *"Envy at another's spiritual good."* Envy is always and in all cases sinful; nevertheless, it is comprehensible that one man should envy another the health, fortune, honors, offices, or even the beauty and happiness for which he himself has striven and hoped in vain, and which have fallen to the lot of that other man,

perhaps quite unsought and unmerited. But it is a much greater sin to be envious of the graces which the Holy Ghost bestows on him; to grudge him his virtue, his zeal, his devotion in prayer, his merits, or the rapid progress which, guided by the Holy Ghost, he makes in true piety and on the road to heaven. It would be wrong to grudge the saints their happiness in heaven; neither is it right to envy any soul the grace which brings him nearer to that blessed state. Moreover, we are not ourselves impoverished by the generous measure of grace poured out upon our neighbor; the goodness and mercy of the Holy Spirit toward him does not in any way bar the road for us, or limit our power to implore precious gifts for ourselves, or make it more difficult for God to grant them to us. The Holy Spirit is free to distribute His favors as He wills. How foolish we are when we allow ourselves to be dissatisfied with God's dealings with His creatures! Who do we think can be less worthy to receive the special visitations of the Holy Ghost than he who presumes to criticize and blame the dispensations of His divine providence?

Next we have the graces offered to the sinner himself and which he resists, thereby sinning against the Holy Ghost. We will consider first the graces which come to him through others in the form of wholesome admonition. "*Obstinacy in sin.*" We are guilty of this when we deliberately avoid the opportunities of receiving wholesome and truthful admonition; keeping out of the way of those from whom we would have a right to expect it; or when we have actually re-

ceived it, setting ourselves to weaken and efface the good impression made upon us, putting the thought of it out of our mind, and turning our attention to other things. When St. Paul was a prisoner in Cesarea Felix, the governor, sent for him to preach the Christian faith to him and to his wife, Drusilla. "And as he treated of justice and chastity, and of the judgment to come, Felix being terrified, answered: For this time go thy way; when I have a more convenient time I will send for thee." His conscience was aroused, but he wished to avoid becoming convinced—*"obstinacy in sin."*

The graces necessary to the conversion of a sinner may be divided into those which enlighten the understanding, and those which work upon the will, or as we generally say, touch the heart.

We resist illuminating grace when as unbelievers we oppose the recognized truth of Christianity. Such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees. Many simple people in town and country believed the teaching of our Saviour; His doctrine was so beautiful, and the value of His lessons was enhanced by the radiance of His own life, and the wonder of His daily miracles and prophecies; further, His words were confirmed by His glorious resurrection from the dead. All this was surely enough to enlighten the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees. But they would not be enlightened. They suspected our Saviour, and said He worked miracles by the power of Satan; they denied the Resurrection and bribed the soldiers to say the body of Jesus had been stolen; they closed their eyes to the light which was so

abundantly given them. What happened then happens now every day. The truth of the Catholic Church is evident to all. Spread over the whole world, she has been maintained in a wonderful manner throughout the centuries, and has at all times been prolific of good to the human race. And yet numbers of people extinguish the light of their early faith with as little thought as one blows out a candle, because their life will not bear its searching rays. Many of us long to measure with our intellect the immensities of heaven, to reckon and weigh the particles of which matter is composed, to penetrate and understand the wonderful secrets of nature; men expend on such objects all the powers and faculties of their mind, devoting the hours of the night and all the days of their lives to their favorite study. But such questions as the existence of a God beyond the stars, and whether He has really spoken to man, the truth of the Catholic Church, or the reality of the life to come after death, possess no interest for them; they pass them by as matters unworthy of their attention. "Men love darkness rather than the light." They resist the Holy Ghost and the recognized truth of Christianity.

That grace of the Holy Ghost by which He moves the will of the sinner can be resisted in many ways, but principally by *presumption.* What effect should the mercy of God have upon us, and what feelings should it engender in our hearts? Surely it should cause us to be sincerely sorry for the sins we have already committed, to form good resolutions, to hope for forgiveness,

to become genuinely converted. And now what is presumption? The catechism tells us, "it is a rash expectation of salvation without making proper use of the necessary means to obtain it." This is the result of God's mercy on many sinners. They think: God is so merciful we need be in no hurry to turn to Him; we may go on sinning still more grievously, more boldly, and more maliciously, because of His goodness. Oh, what abuse of God's grace! Because He is good, we will be wicked; because His mercy is great enough to remove our sins, were they as red as scarlet and as many as the sands of the sea, therefore we will do evil without stint; and so we turn one of our most powerful means of salvation into an occasion of sin.

Those who sin by presumption of God's mercy, although at the time resisting the inspirations urging them to conversion, constantly look forward and hope for graces still to come. But there is another way of sinning against the Holy Ghost by which all future graces are rejected beforehand, namely, *final impenitence.* Notice is given as it were to the Holy Spirit, that all co-operation with His grace is at an end. Oh, the iniquity of denying to the Holy Spirit and His grace an entrance into our souls, and of determining to meet all His repeated mercies with the same opposition! Would any of us care to revisit the house of a man who not only refused us admittance, but who made it known that his door would always be closed against us for the future?

The last and most bitter fruit of these sins of presumption and final impenitence is that in the

end those who are guilty of them fall into *despair*. They either believe like Cain that their sin is too great ever to be forgiven, or that God will not give them any more grace, or, what comes to the same thing, that for them there is no possibility of eternal happiness. Misery and destruction are the bitter fruits of the sins against the Holy Ghost! Amen.

SERMON LV

The Sins of Others

"From the sins of others spare Thy servant" (*Ps.* xviii. 14).

WE HAVE considered the seven capital sins as well as the six sins against the Holy Ghost. Next in order come the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance, which we need not do more than touch upon. They are (1) wilful murder, (2) sodomy—so called because it was the sin of the inhabitants of Sodom, (3) oppression of the poor, (4) defrauding laborers of their wages. They are called sins crying to heaven for vengeance, because by their heinous malice they seem to cry, as it were, to heaven to punish them. The name has its origin in the words of God to Cain after he had killed his brother: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the earth" (*Gen.* iv. 10).

But it will be necessary for us to examine a little more in detail the nine ways of being accessory to the sin of others. We may be guilty of this sin in nine ways: (1) By counsel, (2) by command, (3) by consent, (4) by provocation, (5) by praise and flattery, (6) by silence, (7) by connivance, (8) by partaking, (9) by defense of the ill done. They are called the "sins of others" because their guilt consist in taking part in the sin of another; this may be done not only in dif-

ferent ways, but at the different stages of the sin, that is to say, either:

I. Before.
II. During.
III. Or after the sin.

We will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, give our instruction on these three points.

I

1. We may be accessory to the sin of another *by counsel* before the sin has actually been committed. When Herod promised the daughter of Herodias whatever she chose to ask the girl appealed to her mother: "What shall I ask?" What counsel did the abandoned woman give her daughter: "But she said: the head of John the Baptist"? The girl then made her barbarous request to the king: "I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist." Though the girl herself sinned, the mother sinned much more grievously by suggesting to her daughter a diabolical crime which would otherwise never have occurred to her. It but too often happens that when one friend turns to another for counsel, when a subordinate appeals to his superior, or any inexperienced youth to a man of more mature age, one ignorant to the well-informed, that he receives advice which could not be followed without sin, and sometimes even of so base a character that hell itself could not have devised anything more infamous.

2. We are accessory to the sin of another by command when we command him to do what is wrong. Here, again, the evil action which causes

the sin precedes it, a command being necessarily given before it can be carried out. Herod sinned in this way when he ordered the executioner to decapitate St. John the Baptist. No doubt the executioner too offended God grievously by blindly obeying so terrible a command; but Herod, who gave it, had much the greater guilt. He was the real murderer, the executioner was but the instrument by which his wicked designs were carried into effect. Would to God that offenses of this kind were less frequent! It is but too often the case that parents command their own children to do what is sinful; to tell lies, to steal, to be insolent, to fight, and much more besides.

3. In the same way, when we share in the sin of another by consent, it must naturally occur before the sin which it helps is committed. There are cases where the commission of a sin depends entirely on the consent of one person, who by refusing to agree to it can render it impossible. To consent under these circumstances is obviously a grievous sin. The Scribes and the Pharisees desired the death of our Saviour; they literally thirsted for His blood, but they would have had no power to gratify their evil desires without the consent of Pilate. They themselves said: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, but he wanted to curry favor with the Jews; he feared their threats and dreaded the harm they might do him with Cæsar. He gave in and consented to what they wanted. Let him wash his hands as often as he will, repeating, "I am innocent of

the blood of this just man"; nothing can alter the fact of his guilt as participator in the crime of Golgotha.

4. By provocation. We provoke another to commit sin when we picture to him in advance the profit he will derive from it, and paint in glowing colors the delights he will experience, representing that the guilt entailed is small, the punishment light, the execution of his plan quite simple. The treacherous serpent provoked Eve to commit sin by telling her that its consequences were not evil: "You shall not die," but that on the contrary she would gain an immeasurable good: "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Oh, God, how frequently are such cunningly devised enticements to evil successfully dangled before the eyes of the children of Adam! What numbers of souls have been lost by words and writings, pictures and examples calculated to provoke and draw them on to evil! Many make use of such temptations, but few have power to resist them. What took place in the Garden of Eden is repeated among us daily and hourly.

II

Sometimes we are accessory to the sins of others by what we do at the time of the sin. This is so when we sin by:

1. Silence. It oftens happens that we have power to prevent a sin by a word, a sign, a look, and yet we do not do so. We see that wrong is being done, and we behave as if we were blind; we know what is going forward yet we pretend to be ignorant. By remaining silent when we

ought to speak, and not stopping what it would be quite easy to prevent, we become participators in the sin of another and companions in his guilt.

2. Even more often we commit sin by actual participation. Several people can often effect what would be impossible to one alone; help from others may be either useful or even absolutely necessary to the carrying out of a given plan. When the Jews stoned St. Stephen the Martyr they "laid down their garments at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul." No doubt the crime would have been committed just the same had there been no one there to take charge of their garments, but Saul's assistance facilitated and hurried their action. He tells us himself: "I stood by and consented and kept the garments of them that killed him."

III

Even after the sin of another has actually been committed we may become accessory to it. This is possible in several ways.

1. By praise. King Herod Agrippa caused St. James to be seized and to be put to death. It was a bloody deed, but it won the approbation and praise of the Jews, who commended their king for his persecution of the Christians. The king heard of this, and what was the result? "Seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take up Peter also. . . . He cast him into prison . . . intending after the Pasch to bring him forth to the people." He would have killed him, too; you see, by their praise of the first crime the Jews

caused the king to desire yet greater deeds of violence.

2. The eighth way by which we may be accessory to the sin of another is by connivance. The sons of the high-priest, Heli, profaned the Holy of Holies by the most wicked crimes. Their father knew of their conduct and, though he blamed his sons and reproved them for it, he did not punish them as he ought and as he had power to do. By neglecting this duty he connived at their sin, shared in their guilt, and had to bear his part in their punishment. The two sons were killed in battle; on the same day the Ark of the Covenant fell into the hands of the enemy, and Heli on receiving the news dropped from his stool and broke his neck.

3. If we may become accessory to the sin of another by neglecting to punish evil or even by praising it, how much worse it is to do so by deliberately defending it, for this is not only refusing to blame or to punish it, but it is going the length of trying to justify it, and preventing others from blaming or punishing it. By calling vice virtue, making wrong appear right, and evil good, the last obstacles to sin are cleared away.

Dearly beloved brethren, we have all good reason to pray with the Psalmist: "Who can understand sin? From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant. If they shall have no dominion over me, then shall I be without spot." Friends must take care that they are not accessory to the sins of their friends, parents that they are not a cause of sin to their children, and superiors or any one

in authority that they are not a stumbling-block to those under their charge. Wo to us if any soul should accuse us before the judgment-seat of God of having aided and abetted it in sin by counsel, or command, provocation, praise or flattery, silence, connivance or defence of the ill done. If we have had part in the sin we will share the judgment: "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant." Amen.

SERMON LVI

On Christian Virtue

"They shall go from virtue to virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion" (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 8).

If we have spent so much time in considering sin, its nature, and its different divisions and classifications, it was in order that, by knowing it better, it might be easier for us to guard securely against it. By being acquainted with the appearance of poisonous fungi, and able to recognize them by their shape, color, and smell, we run much less risk of being poisoned by them than if we had never heard that such things existed.

Nevertheless, the avoidance of sin is but one side of the life of a Christian; we should not be contented with keeping ourselves free from grievous faults, we should also strive diligently to advance in virtue and attain perfection. The second side of our task in life, therefore, is to advance in virtue and attain perfection. If we think over it a little we shall see that the one hinges on to the other; the mere endeavor to avoid sin calls forth the practice of virtue, just as the practice of virtue necessitates the avoidance of sin, or at least of grievous sin. The two form one whole and are necessary parts of it, just as inward and outward breathing are necessary for respiration.

But though so intimately connected they may be regarded separately, and having up to the present

devoted our instructions to sin, we will now pass on to the subject of virtue and its completion, namely, Christian perfection. To-day we will consider, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

I. The nature of Christian virtue.
II. How it is divided.

I

In what does Christian virtue consist? It consists in the supernatural faculty and constant effort by which we do what is pleasing to God. We now no longer require to be told what things are acceptable to God, for we have devoted a long time to the study of the commandments, beginning with the greatest and first commandment, and going on through the ten commandments of God and the six commandments of the Church; from them we learn how to please God. But the definition we have given of virtue requires a few words of explanation. We have said (1) that virtue is a *faculty,* (2) that it is a *supernatural* faculty, (3) that it is an *effort,* and (4) that it is a *constant* effort. If we understand these four words thoroughly we will have grasped the meaning of Christian virtue.

First of all, then, virtue is the faculty of doing what is pleasing to God. The eye in its normal state possesses the faculty of seeing, the ear of hearing, the tongue of speaking. But who possesses the faculty of doing what is pleasing to God? It belongs to all men who have attained the use of reason, because they are capable, on the one hand, of recognizing the voice of conscience and learning what God requires of them, and, on

the other hand, because they possess free will and are in a position to use it. Therefore, every man has the faculty of doing what is pleasing to God.

But is every man, therefore, virtuous? I have not said so. Every man possesses the faculty of being virtuous, which depends on the understanding and the free will; and these being inherent in human nature it may be said that the faculty of pleasing God is natural to man. But we are told that Christian virtue is a supernatural faculty. St. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians mentions St. Luke as "Luke, the most dear physician" (*Col.* iv. 14). St. Luke had formerly followed the calling of a doctor, and was therefore learned and experienced in medicine and qualified to cure illness and disease. Was this a natural or a supernatural faculty? It was a natural faculty, resting upon knowledge acquired in a natural way, and dependent on the application of natural remedies. Now we may well take for granted that after St. Luke had become a Christian and was a priest and an evangelist, he had his share in those supernatural gifts promised and actually given by our Saviour to the apostles and the first preachers of the Gospel. Among them was the power of healing, which St. Luke received in common with his brethren, and by which he was able to cure such diseases as were beyond the power of natural means. It was a supernatural faculty. In the same way there is in human nature the faculty to do what is pleasing to God, and this faculty is capable of being extended and elevated, strengthened and ennobled till it becomes a supernatural faculty. Our eye is capable of discern-

ing unaided a great number of the heavenly bodies by its mere natural power. But if an astronomer allows us to look through his telescope, then the moon and the planets assume much larger and clearer proportions; they seem much nearer to us, and many stars become visible which were not apparent at all to the naked eye.

The supernatural faculty to do what is pleasing to God does not in itself alone constitute Christian virtue. There is still something to add, namely, the *effort* to do what is pleasing to God. As water strives to flow downward, and all material bodies to fall to the ground, so Christian virtue consists not only in the faculty but in the serious effort to please God. Now to do this involves *more* effort for some and *less* effort for others, but whether it be easy or difficult it is the object of Christian virtue to try at least to accomplish it; therefore, the effort must be constant. We can not say of a man who once in a while tries to remain quiet and patient under injury, though habitually giving way to outbursts of anger and resentment, that he has acquired the virtue of patience. But whoever applies himself constantly and perseveringly to suppress the angry motions of his heart is truly practising the virtue of patience even though he be occasionally overcome by the violence of his feelings.

Virtue, therefore, consists in the supernatural faculty and constant effort by which we do what is pleasing to God.

II

Let us ask, in the second place, how is Christian virtue divided? It is divided into the theological

and the moral virtues. It seems strange that a moment ago we spoke of virtue in the singular number as if there were only one single virtue; and yet now we allude to it in the plural and divide it into two different classes. How is that to be explained? It is quite simple. Christian virtue is the supernatural faculty and the constant effort by which we do what is pleasing to God. What pleases God may be looked at from different points of view. There is but one God and one divine will, and all that pleases Him makes one whole when considered in relation to His divine will; but, on the other hand, the things by which we may please Him are in themselves very numerous: humility, purity, patience, and so on. If you plunge your hand into a corn-bin and draw it out full of corn, you have a handful of grains; considered all together in your hand they form a single unit, a handful of corn. But if each grain of corn is counted individually and singly, then they make up a great number, a whole multitude of grains of corn. Every Christian virtue is pleasing to God, and in relation to the will of God makes up one great universal whole; but considered in themselves there are a large number of Christian virtues.

Further, we ask, why are the Christian virtues divided into theological virtues and moral virtues? There must be a reason; a correct classification must rest upon some sound basis and the same object may be quite rightly divided and classified in several different ways. For instance, money may be divided into good money and bad

money, taking its genuineness as the basis; or it can be classified as metal money and paper money according to the material of which it is made, or as currency of the realm and foreign money, or as ancient coinage and modern coinage, etc., etc. Now virtue is divided into theological virtues and moral virtues, according to the object or end toward which these virtues specially tend. Things are often named after the object for which they are meant and the use made of them. We distinguish cart-horses, carriage-horses, riding-horses, hunters, and racers according as they are used in farm work, or for driving, riding, hunting, or racing. The theological virtues relate immediately to God; they are directed to the truth, the faithfulness, the goodness of God—faith, hope, and charity. The moral virtues have their immediate bearing upon our own moral conduct which they regulate according to the divine will. For these reasons the first are called theological virtues, the second moral virtues.

Let us desire virtue above all things, for it constitutes the spiritual beauty of the soul, and makes it pleasing in the eyes of God. If a general were allowed to have his pick out of a crowd of men, he would choose those who were the strongest and the bravest; a scholar would select the cleverest and the most diligent; an artist would look out for any possessed of artistic talent. But when the all-knowing and all-seeing eye of God rests upon men it is the virtuous and those who are advancing in virtue who are pleasing to Him; he loves not only such souls, but those also who are even

trying and wishing to walk in the path of true virtue, and to all these He gives His grace. "The law-giver shall give a blessing; they shall go from virtue to virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion" (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 8). Amen.

SERMON LVII

The Theological Virtues

"Now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity" (1 *Cor.* xiii. 13).

We saw last Sunday that Christian virtue in general falls into two classes, the theological virtues and the moral virtues. The theological virtues are three in number and are called faith, hope, and charity, words which are familiar to every Christian child. We learned last week that they are called theological because they relate immediately to God; but there is a second reason why they are so called, namely, because they are infused into the soul directly by the hand of God Himself. They are called theological, therefore, because they come directly from God and relate immediately to Him. We may describe a train as the "Paris train," for instance, quite as well because it comes *from* Paris, as because it goes *to* Paris.

We will now turn our attention to the three theological virtues, considering, with the help of the Holy Ghost:

I. Their nature.
II. Their practice.

I

The theological virtues may be briefly described as embodying the intercourse of the human soul with God. The terms in which they are defined

by the catechism tell us so. "What is faith?" "Faith is a divine virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed." Now what do we do when we believe? We accept something as true. What is it that we here accept as true? The truths which God has revealed; by faith, therefore, spiritual relations are established with God; we think as He thinks on the most important subjects. Where do we come from? Where does the world come from? From God, the Creator. Whither are we going? To God, who is the end of man, our father, our saviour, our judge, our sanctifier. What light and comfort these propositions contain for him who is firmly convinced of their truth! This world is no longer a riddle to him, life is no longer enveloped in clouds, nor is death the black gate beyond which he can see only darkness; he participates to some extent in the light of the Divine Spirit. The first thing, for example, we should expect of the members of a family who were closely united would be that their ideas concerning such things as where to live, education, business, etc., would be fundamentally the same. Two very close and intimate friends would be likely to have the same religious and political views, and to agree in their opinions on most matters of importance. Faith is that virtue by which we think like God.

"What is hope?" "Hope is a divine virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal life and the means to obtain it." According to this answer hope is to expect something. Now what do we expect? We expect those things promised us by God Himself, namely, His forgiveness

and His grace here below and eternal life in the world to come. How do we expect it? With firm trust. On what is this firm trust based? It is based on the character of God, who is powerful, and good, and faithful. Here again we are entering into relations with the Almighty, establishing, as it were, a sort of community of goods. Parents always keep open house for their sons and daughters, who take it for granted that as long as their parents live, children have a right to the privileges of home, and that they will inherit their parents' possessions after they are dead. By hope we claim our share of all that God possesses. He is the highest good, and has promised Himself as the reward of His own. "All I have is thine," "I am thy reward exceeding great." Oh, how empty, how treacherous, how fleeting is all that this earth has to offer! Joy and sorrow, happiness and unhappiness, life and death ebb and flow like the waves of a storm-tossed sea; there is neither peace nor security. But he who carries in his heart the virtue of hope can find even in the very middle of the angry ocean a firm roadstead in which to cast his anchor—the divine promises. By hope his eyes are raised to a merciful God ever ready to forgive; a generous God pouring out His grace in abundance; He looks up to Him who is the highest good, our unending possession, happiness without limit, blessedness beyond all that we can conceive. God promises, mankind hopes. So we enter into a community of goods with our Maker, for by hope we possess beforehand the eternal good.

"What is charity?" "Charity is a divine virtue by which we love God above all things for

His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God." What do we do, therefore, by the virtue of charity? We give something. What do we give? We give ourselves, our love. To whom? To God our Lord. How do we give it? Without restriction or limit. Why do we do this? For His own sake. What can be said to establish intercourse with a person if not love? The very root and essence of love is to wish good, and, if we can, to work good to the object of our love. God has loved us from all eternity and the proofs of His love for us are more numerous than the sands on the seashore; if we really love Him, we shall desire good for Him, and we shall wish to give Him something. But He is so rich and we are so poor; what can we offer which is more pleasing to Him than our heart, our love, our service? He gives and we receive; we give and He receives; how close and intimate is that relation and intercourse which results from God's love for the soul, and the soul's love for God.

By faith, hope, and charity we live in spiritual relationship and intercourse with God. By faith we rely on the eternal truth of God and think in all things as He thinks; by hope we cling to the divine promises and expect all God's good and most perfect gifts; by love the soul is united by every fiber of its being to God Himself, the highest good. The theological virtues are a threefold tie binding the soul to God and God to the soul. As long as one of these virtues lives in our heart we are not entirely cut off from our Maker, but the soul in whom all three abide is in the en-

joyment of intimate union and real community of life with the author of all good.

II

Having considered the nature of the theological virtues the question now arises how we are to keep them alive in our heart. In the first place, what do we mean exactly by keeping them alive? Our meaning is illustrated to perfection by the picture of a man being wakened out of his sleep. As long as he lies sleeping he sees nothing, hears nothing, says and thinks nothing, although all the time actually possessing the power and the faculties of seeing, hearing, speaking and thinking; the moment he is aroused he at once begins to exercise them. Faith, hope, and charity may be said to be slumbering in every soul; we must constantly rouse them if we want to keep them alive, by making with love, feeling, and understanding acts of faith, hope, and charity, whether in words or only in thought, out of the catechism or prayer-book, or in whatever way seems to suit us best.

We should make these acts frequently, but especially (1) in moments of temptation against these virtues, (2) when we receive the holy sacraments, (3) when we are in danger of losing our life and on our death-bed.

How often in our daily life should we make a point of rousing these feelings within us in order to keep them alive? Every day? Every morning? Every evening? Once a day? Once a month? It is difficult to lay down a rule; many Christians reproach themselves very much when they neglect or forget to do this regularly. My

advice to you is this: Whoever is leading a Christian life will find plenty of opportunity one way or another for exciting these virtues in his heart, even though he does not perhaps do so in the precise words of the catechism or prayer-book. It is very simple. In a Christian life there must be prayer, and we can not pray without faith, or without hoping that our prayer will be heard. Moreover, to live as Christians we must occasionally receive the sacraments, and assist at Mass at least on Sunday and holy-days of obligation, and no man can do this with any devotion unless he has at least the feeling of faith, hope, and charity in his heart, and without attempting to rouse himself to greater fervor in these virtues. Therefore, whoever lives as a Christian can not fail to fulfill his duty in this respect; nevertheless, it is a good and highly commendable practice to make, after our morning or evening prayers, or both, acts of faith, hope, and charity.

But we have referred to special occasions when it is particularly desirable to exercise these feelings in a special way.

1. In temptations against these virtues. We should rouse our faith when we are tempted against faith, our hope when we are tempted against hope; our charity when we are tempted against charity. When the news reaches a citadel that a hostile force is marching against it, at once the guards are doubled, moats are widened, cannon loaded and trained; moreover, the garrison is increased and a store of provisions laid in. Whichever virtue is attacked, it is that which we must at once strengthen and call to our aid.

2. When we receive the sacraments we must try to stir these virtues in our hearts, exciting ourselves especially to hope for forgiveness when we go to confession, to love when we approach the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and always seeking to renew our faith. The soul adorned and made beautiful by faith, hope, and charity will never fail to receive the sacraments worthily and profitably.

3. When our life is in danger, and on our deathbed. At such moments every tie that binds us to earth is severed; we are leaving the world and the world is leaving us. What can be better, wiser, or more fitting than to cling to all that links us to God, tightening and strengthening the chains, grasping them firmly with both hands and holding to them, for they will never fail us. May we have strength to say: "O Lord, the sight of my eyes is nearly extinguished, my memory is leaving me, but the light of faith burns brightly in my soul. May it become merged in the radiance of eternity. I believe in Thee. My God, though everything forsakes me Thou wilt never forsake me. In Thee, O God, have I hoped; let me not be confounded forever. I love Thee and will love Thee for all eternity. Thou art the God of my heart and my portion forever. Amen.

SERMON LVIII

The Four Cardinal Virtues

". . . Temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, . . . are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life" (*Wis.* viii. 7).

THE Christian virtues are divided into theological and moral virtues. With regard to the three theological virtues we saw last Sunday that it is on them that our spiritual relations and intercourse with God depends, and we considered how we might practice them and keep them alive in our hearts.

We will now pass on to the moral virtues, which are so called because they regulate our moral conduct according to the will of God. Their number is very great, and we should never end if we tried to explain them one by one; it would be a difficult task even to remember them all. We will therefore divide our subject into two parts, and will confine ourselves:

I. To the consideration of the four principal or cardinal virtues.

II. To specifying the virtues particularly opposed to the seven capital sins.

I

The four principal or cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. In order to understand the two first, namely, prudence and justice, we must bear in mind that our

soul possesses two fundamental powers. The body has two hands and two arms with which to work; and the soul has two powers, namely, understanding and free will, by means of which it accomplishes all its operations. Prudence may be described as the virtue of the understanding, and justice as that of the will.

When can we say of a man that he is prudent? Briefly, a prudent man is one who knows how to find the right means to a right end. Let us picture a number of men all determined to emigrate and seek their fortunes abroad. What would prudence require of them in such a case? First of all, they must consider carefully where to go. The prudent among them will certainly select a country where their own particular talents, resources, and knowledge may be turned to the best advantage. It would be extremely foolish to choose an unhealthy climate; or any place where war, famine, and infectious disease were of great frequency; or where the soil was very sterile and hard to cultivate; where roads were bad and means of communication few. But let us take it that they have chosen, and chosen wisely. Prudence would further demand that they should thoroughly inform themselves as to the various routes in order to know how to reach their destination in the safest, quickest, and cheapest way. They would have to ask: When does the train start? When does the ship sail? What will the ticket cost?

Now the Christian virtue of prudence makes us think and speak in exactly the same way; it is that supernatural faculty of the soul which en-

ables us always, under all circumstances of life, to turn our eyes to the real end and object of man, and to seek and find those things that conduce to his eternal happiness. "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" At all stages and under all conditions of life Christian prudence is concerned with discovering the right road and the right means of reaching the heavenly home, inquiring in youth "in what station shall I best save my soul," and making the choice accordingly. "How can I use everything so that it may help me to attain my end?" This is the question repeated in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in youth and old age. In a word, Christian prudence is to the Christian life what a compass is to a ship, it indicates the right course to steer across the broad expanse of the ocean.

But to know the end and the way is but one side of the question; it is only the beginning. The next point is to strive to follow it. The virtue of justice consists in the constant and persevering effort of the will to follow the path which leads to our eternal home. The word "justice" may be understood in a double sense. In its narrower meaning it consists in the disposition to give to every one his due. This is the special attribute displayed by rulers when they see that the benefits and the burdens of state rest equally on their subjects, and are enjoyed and shared by all; citizens practice it by paying to every one his due, and judges when they award punishment with due regard to the guilt of the offender. But when we speak of justice as a cardinal virtue we do not

allude to it in this, its more restricted meaning; we are taking it in a much broader and wider sense, a sense in which it includes nearly all the other virtues. It was in this sense that Noe was described as "a just and perfect man"; his justice implied all his other perfections. We are told of St. Joseph that he was just, and of Zachary and Elizabeth, the parents of St. John the Baptist, that "they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." Here we have justice in its widest sense, in which it consists in the constant endeavor to persevere to the end on the road to eternal life. "The path of the just as a shining light goeth forward, and increaseth even to perfect day" (*Prov.* iv. 18). The perfect day is the eternal light of heaven.

When a Christian man possesses the virtue of prudence, by which he is able to discern his real end, eternal life, and the way in which he should walk to reach it; and when to this he adds the virtue of justice, namely, the constant determination of the will to persevere in this way until the end; then it happens almost invariably that obstacles of two kinds rise up to deter him.

First come those which are of a pleasant nature, which seek to entice us from the right path, things flattering to our natural love of ease and comfort, gratifying to the desires of the flesh, or which seem to us to contain the promise of worldly pleasure and enjoyment. To meet such obstacles and temptations we stand in need of yet another cardinal virtue, namely, temperance, by which we learn moderation in all those things that are de-

lightful to us, the moderation which will keep us from sin, and will ensure the mastery of the spirit over the flesh, furthering and not hindering our progress on the road to heaven.

But we must also expect difficulties of an unpleasant, disagreeable, distasteful nature. He who wants to keep to the straight road that leads to heaven must be prepared for the derision and ridicule of the world, and for neglect and contempt, perhaps even injury and persecution at the hands of his fellow-men. In addition to this he must endure the toil and labor involved in the practice of virtue, as well as such trials and sufferings as are laid by God on His most faithful servants. A virtuous Christian, therefore, has need of the fourth cardinal virtue, fortitude, to enable him to face all these difficulties, to despise them and overcome them fearlessly and triumphantly. We see this virtue shining forth conspicuously in the lives and the glorious deaths of the holy martyrs. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent shall bear it away."

If any place on earth were able to afford us the delights of heaven—perfect happiness for all who succeeded in getting there—what should we all do? We should find out where this wonderful place was and how to reach it. We should start off on our way, firmly determined to travel if need be to the end of the world in order to find it. No doubt we should require food and drink, refreshment and sleep, as well as some sort of comradeship on our long voyage, but we should make use of such things only in so far as they helped

us, and should never allow them to delay our progress for a single moment. Let us suppose that at last we get there. The town is situated on a high mountain surrounded by forests full of wild animals; we can hear the roar of the lions; the mountain is very steep and overgrown with thorn bushes; the town walls are high and sheer, and must be climbed. But to enter the town where perfect happiness awaits us should we not be willing to expend not only trouble and sweat, but to shed our blood, and even risk our life? Now, heaven is the city on the mountain. Christian prudence points the way to it, while justice determines us to follow that way; temperance overcomes all inducements to forsake it, and fortitude enables us to face bravely the alarming obstacles with which it is beset and which are calculated to deter us from reaching our goal.

II

Although these four cardinal or principal virtues comprise all the other moral virtues, we must not fail to enumerate at least those which are directly opposed to the seven capital sins, giving an example of each out of Holy Scripture.

Humility is the opposite of the first capital sin. Example: the blessed Virgin Mary, who, though Mother of God, called herself His handmaid. What a contrast does such humility offer to the pride of Lucifer!

Liberality is the opposite of covetousness, which is the second capital sin. "If thou have much give abundantly; if thou have little take

care even so to bestow willingly a little." These are the words of Tobias to his son.

Chastity is the opposite of lust, the third capital sin. Example: Joseph in Egypt.

Meekness is the opposite of anger, the fourth capital sin. St. Stephen stood like an angel before the council of the Jews in spite of the bitterness his enemies displayed against him.

Temperance is the opposite of the fifth capital sin, gluttony. Daniel and his friends at the court of the great King of Babylon refused the meat and the wine offered them, and asked for "pulse and water."

Brotherly love is the opposite of envy, the sixth capital sin. Abraham allowed his nephew Lot free choice of the pasture-land to the right or to the left.

Diligence is the opposite of sloth, the seventh capital sin. The apostle St. Paul, for whom the whole world was scarcely big enough as a field for his work of conversion, offers us a glorious example of diligence. "Temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude . . . are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life." Even in temporal concerns a wise and prudent head effects more than a strong arm, and is worth more than a large fortune; and when it comes to spiritual matters what can be more prudent than to fix our gaze on our home above, and on the road that leads to it? He who does so is alone wise; all the rest are fools. What can be more profitable to us than justice, by which we persevere in the road we know to be right—for it is sheer madness to know the road to heaven and

not to follow it. Justice, led by prudence and accompanied by temperance and fortitude, will rise triumphant over all difficulties, and will attain its true end. In truth, prudence and justice, temperance and fortitude are the most profitable things in life. Amen.

SERMON LIX

On Christian Perfection

"Be you therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matt.* v. 48).

We have fully considered the three theological virtues, and the four principal, or cardinal, virtues. These seven virtues are often compared to the seven pillars of which Holy Scripture speaks, saying: "Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars." From these pillars, and supported by them, rises up a roof which unites and crowns them. This may be taken as a type of Christian perfection, which is the object to which virtues tend and which comprises them all.

We will now turn to the consideration of Christian perfection, and will examine with the help of the Holy Spirit in what it consists, where we find an example of it, and what the road is that leads to it.

I

In what does Christian perfection consist? Christian perfection consists in loving God above all things and all things in God. Its essence is to love God above all things, for by so doing we shall certainly also love all other things in Him, namely, as He wills, as much as He wills, and because He wills.

Are we justified in thus representing that

Christian perfection consists before everything else in the love of God? We are justified, for "love is the fulfilling of the law"; in other words, whoever loves God above all things has fulfilled the whole law perfectly. "Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection"; this means that charity and perfection are interwoven in the closest possible manner; it is the teaching of St. Paul, who had himself attained perfection and knew well in what it consists.

St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. Thomas all agree with the holy apostle on this point.

Moreover, it is easy to see why we must seek Christian perfection in the love of God before everything else. There are many other glorious and beautiful virtues, such as humility, purity of heart, mercy. But if any one of them alone constitutes Christian perfection it must necessarily be that one which is pre-eminent among them, the most sublime, the queen of them all. Which would we describe in these terms? Surely the love of God. The theological virtues rank before the moral virtues, and of them charity is the first and the greatest. "Now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." All other virtues are but steps leading to the love of God.

If any single virtue comprises in itself the whole of Christian perfection, it must be one capable of including and implying all the others; and this is what the love of God does. If any man love God above all things, he will readily believe His word, hope firmly in His promises, and endeavor according to God's holy will to practice

humility, brotherly love, mercy, and all the other virtues pleasing to Him.

Therefore, Christian perfection depends before everything else on love of God. It would be a mistake to think it consisted in long prayers, austerities, almsgiving, or the working of miracles. Perfection under some circumstances requires such things, or they may be marks and evidences of it, but they do not in themselves constitute it. "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity I am nothing." The marks of perfection are the same as those by which we recognize true love of God. How can we tell whether we love God? We love God if we do His holy will, that is if we keep His commandments.

II

Now that we see clearly what perfection is we naturally ask, where shall we find a pattern, a model of this Christian perfection which we may follow; which is the way that leads to it? The way to perfection lies in the imitation of Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus Christ must be our model and pattern; it is by contemplating and imitating it that we shall attain perfection. Artists of all kinds, painters, sculptors, poets, if they want to excel in their art, give themselves up to the careful study of the work of the old masters, and try to form their style on this model. In Jesus Christ we have the highest, most sublime, and complete type of Christian perfection, the perfect pattern for every age, station, and condition of life. As a child He was perfect, growing in grace

and wisdom before God and man; although more holy, more powerful, more wise than Mary and Joseph, he was subject to them in the lowliness and poverty of the little house at Nazareth. As a youth He was modest and obedient, offering a perfect example to those about to undertake any new enterprise. Consider how He prayed and prepared Himself in the desert for His public life; what strength He displayed in rejecting the suggestions of the evil spirit; and what burning zeal He showed all through His public life to accomplish the mission given Him by His Father. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." How great was His reverence for the Father, His patience with the apostles and disciples, His condescension to the multitude, His compassion for the sick and poor, His love for sinners, His humility in the working of His daily miracles! It is in times of trial and suffering above all that we expect the perfection of a Christian to stand fast and endure, and so it is in His sufferings and death that the sublime example of Jesus Christ shines out most conspicuously. We find Him enduring His passion with infinite fortitude and in complete resignation to the will of God; and, full of love for His enemies, offering Himself on the cross in a spirit of complete self-sacrifice for the sins of the world. His every thought, word, and deed, His life, sufferings, and death, are alike stamped with the impress of infinite perfection; and the saints who strove to lead perfect lives here below have all taken Him as their type and model. Our Saviour Himself calls upon us to imitate Him, saying: "Learn of Me, for I am meek

and humble of heart," and especially in His sufferings He wishes to give us an example: "If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow Me." St. Peter tells us the same thing: "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps."

If we want to know what particular points and virtues in Our Lord's life to keep specially before our eyes in order to imitate them ourselves in our own lives, we should do well to study the eight beatitudes given by our Saviour at the beginning of His public ministry in the Sermon on the Mount. They are: (1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—those who are humble; (2) "Blessed are the meek"—the patient and gentle; (3) "Blessed are they that mourn"—those who repent and do penance; (4) "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice"—who strain earnestly after perfection; (5) "Blessed are the merciful"—who practice brotherly love; (6) "Blessed are the clean of heart"—the chaste; (7) "Blessed are the peace-makers"—those who love peace; (8) "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake"—who show fortitude under suffering and injury. Our Saviour in very clear language promised the reward of eternal life to all who practise these virtues; they will inherit the kingdom of heaven, the land of promise; they will enjoy the consolation of eternal life, the bliss of everlasting happiness, the vision of God, their Father, for all eternity. The eight beatitudes give us a complete plan or programme, so to speak, for a perfect Christian life, and a glance at the life of our divine Saviour,

one look at His cross, will convince us that He Himself practised in the most complete manner all that He requires of us.

III

We have seen in what Christian perfection consists, and to whom we have to look as our model; but we must not close this instruction without asking ourselves whether or not we are all bound to aim at so high a standard.

Certainly we must aim at it, for our Saviour has commanded it, saying: "Be ye perfect." But, more than this, perfection consists in loving God above all things, and this love is also commanded us by the greatest and the chief commandment: "Thou *shalt*" (note well these words) "love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind; this is the greatest and the first commandment." To aim at perfection is therefore commanded us; it is the primary commandment, enjoined on all.

Now spare me, I beg, the ordinary excuses of lukewarm, slothful, and worldly-minded Christians. Perfection is all very well for religious, for monks and nuns who have said good-bye to the world, for priests who are to a great extent relieved of its burdens, for women to whom piety is attractive, and for children who are not yet emancipated. But for us who live in the very midst of the cares and business of life, in the full stream of its perils and temptations, perfection is out of the question. Such reasoning, though very general, is absolutely false. To strive after perfection is the duty of every one, be he priest or

layman, monk or secular, married or single, young or old. There is but one God, one heaven, one Christ, one commandment; the end is the same for all men; the same perfection, namely, to love God above all things, is required of all, and without it there is no salvation; the only difference that exists consists in the fact of its being easier of attainment in the quiet of the cloister—not in its having no bearing on other lives; the commandment is binding on all. O dear Lord and Saviour, master, teacher, model of all perfection, grant that Thy commandment may be ineffaceably engraven on my heart, that Thy life may be ever present to my mind, that Thy almighty hand may guide and support me so that I may follow in Thy footsteps in life and death, till I reach eternity. Amen.

SERMON LX

On the Means of Attaining Perfection

"Be you therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matt.* v. 48).

In our instruction last Sunday we considered the nature of Christian perfection, the example of it offered for our imitation, and our duty in regard to it. We learned that perfection is to love God above all things; that Jesus Christ is the highest type of Christian perfection for all time, and that the obligation to strive after it is expressed in God's commandment to us and is incumbent on each one of us without exception.

It now only remains for us to see what means we should employ in order to attain it. An artist about to make a copy of a beautiful picture, even though he has the very best materials at his command, will pause before he begins, and carefully consider which of them he will use. The means by which we may attain Christian perfection fall into two classes:

I. Those to be used by all without exception.
II. Those to be used only by certain among us.

We will to-day, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, make our meditation on these different means of attaining to perfection.

I

The three great means by which Christians may attain perfection are (1) love of prayer, the dili-

gent hearing of the word of God, and frequent reception of the Sacraments; (2) resolute self-denial and self-conquest; (3) the performance of daily actions in a state of grace, and in a manner acceptable to God.

These are means which all must make use of. A traveler arrives one summer in Switzererland intending to ascend one of the highest mountain peaks. What equipment will be considered necessary for his undertaking? He will be advised first to provide himself with an alpenstock. An alpenstock is a long staff, furnished at the end with a sharp point, and is used as a support on these long expeditions, and as a means of jumping over running brooks, rocks, and small fissures in the ice. Moreover, it serves to test the strength and firmness of the ground, and helps to gain a foothold on very slippery surfaces. It would be considered indispensable to an Alpine climber, but it would not be the only thing required. If he intended to make any very difficult ascent a reliable guide would be strongly recommended, one familiar with the road, and with the signs of the weather, who would recognize the approach of danger, and know where to take refuge in case of necessity. In addition to this it would be only prudent to carry some supply of food and drink, as well as medicines and remedies in case of faintness or accident; for on the heights hotels and human habitations of any kind are few and far between.

1. Now the things necessary for an Alpine climber if he wishes to be successful on his expedition are also, in their way, needed by any Christian who is determined to scale the heights

of perfection. In his hand he must carry the strong staff of earnest daily prayer, for without it there can be no progress. God's word must be his guide, and that it may help him he must listen to it diligently in sermons, instructions, and spiritual reading; only venturesome fools would think themselves independent of guidance in their upward journey. Nourishment he will also require —the bread of life in holy communion, the waters of purification in the sacrament of Penance— otherwise covered by the dust of life, his steps hampered by fatigue, exhausted by the pain of his wounds, he will faint away and perish on the road.

2. The second means which all Christians must employ to attain Christian perfection is constant self-denial and mortification. What is self-denial? How did St. Peter deny our Saviour? Knowing Him very well he said that he did not know Him. Shortly before he had openly confessed His master, saying, "Thou art Christ, Son of the living God"; and now He asserts, "I know not the man." He denied our Saviour. What, then, have we to do if we want to deny ourselves? We must take no account of self at all, acting as though self did not exist, suffering injury as though it did not affect us, bearing praise as though it did not regard us, working and striving, and enduring privation as though we felt no strain at all: "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself."

3. The third means of perfection necessary to all, and one that goes to the root of things consists in the performance of daily actions in a state

of grace and in a manner acceptable to God. What can concern us more nearly than the actions we are obliged to perform day by day, whether in our own home or outside, at business, in factories, as officials, or in service. In order to be perfect we need not alter our state or condition in life, or give up our profession or trade or calling, whatever it may be; we require only to be solicitous that everything we do be done in a manner pleasing to God, and that we perform all our actions in a state of grace. This entails care to do everything as well as ever we can. All God's works are perfect; the smallest blade of grass is as complete in form, detail, and organization as the highest cedar of Lebanon. To make our works pleasing to God the smallest, most commonplace every-day actions must be performed as perfectly as possible, and above all they must be done with the intention of honoring and serving God, and for love of Him. In this way our every movement, every step we take, the very sweat of our brow, the words of our lips, the thoughts and feelings of our hearts, will continually tend to bring us nearer and nearer to the longed-for goal of Christian perfection.

III

In addition to these means, which must be employed by all Christians if they want to attain Christian perfection, there are others which are not commanded us, but only recommended. These particular means, called the three evangelical counsels, are (1) voluntary poverty, (2) perpetual

chastity, and (3) entire obedience to an ecclesiastical superior.

A doctor in treating a patient might not only prescribe medicines absolutely and unconditionally necessary for the recovery of the sick person; he might go on to advise him, if he had time and money, to spend a few months at a certain specified watering-place. The medicine is imperatively needed; the visit to the watering-place is only recommended as desirable.

These three counsels are called evangelical, because they are given in the Gospel of Jesus Christ Himself. Our Saviour counseled voluntary poverty to the rich young man who asked Him: "Master, what shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" Our Saviour answered: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." But the young man replied: "All these have I kept from my youth. What is yet wanting to me?" Then our Saviour gave him a counsel: "If thou wilt be perfect go sell what thou hast and give to the poor," He told him to make himself poor, that he might have treasure in heaven, and called upon him to surrender himself entirely to divine guidance: "and come, follow Me." We find, therefore, voluntary poverty and obedience to a spiritual superior counseled by our Saviour in one and the same passage. On another occasion the apostles entered into a discussion on the merits of the married state, as opposed to voluntary perpetual chastity, and in speaking of chastity our Saviour spoke these remarkable words: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given."

We do not need further proof that the evangelical counsels are a means of perfection. They were given by our Saviour Himself who was never unpractical or unreal in His teaching; the Church has since the very beginning sanctioned and encouraged their adoption, and they have been embraced and followed by thousands of her children. By practising them countless souls have attained a high place in heaven; some have taken one or other, or all of these counsels and silently regulated their lives according to the principles they contain; others have united and come together to live in common on the lines that they lay down; these last form the Religious Orders of the Catholic Church. As early as the days of the persecutions we hear of men and women retiring to the desert to serve God in poverty and solitude and voluntary self-sacrifice. Such were the Fathers of the desert. Gradually they grew into one body, living in community, and appointing the one among them most distinguished for sanctity to be their head. Religious life was first organized in this way in the East by St. Basil, and in the West by St. Augustine, and later it was further developed and completed through St. Benedict. In the Middle Ages arose the two great orders of the Dominicans and Franciscans, whose holy founders were contemporaries and close friends, and later became canonized saints: St. Dominic and St. Francis. In more modern times, after the days of that great schism, which men so untruly call the Reformation, the Society of Jesus was instituted by St. Ignatius Loyola. Orders of women also are now very numerous.

Members of all these Religious Orders bind themselves by vow to observe the three evangelical counsels.

Dearly beloved brethren, I am quite sure you do not belong to the number of those who despise and reject and throw ridicule upon the Religious Orders. Is it possible to reject what the Gospel teaches, to despise what Jesus Christ and the Church have praised and exalted? Unbelievers, the enemies of Christ and His Church, do this, but it is not for us to join them. Nevertheless, we often hear them severely criticized, even by the lips of the faithful. Now people in religion have their faults; who has not? They are not saints; they have not yet reached perfection, but they are striving for it. How would people in the world fare if Religious in their turn were to sit in judgment on them in this harsh manner? It is quite open to them to say: "Have you not quite as strict an obligation as we to become perfect? Do you not possess the means that lead to it? Why do you not use them? Why are you so quick to detect our faults, and so ready to excuse your own?" They would be quite justified in speaking in this way.

Let us, therefore, leave each one free to follow his own path, so long as it leads to perfection. If we can not walk in the way of the counsels, let us follow all the more zealously that of the commandments. "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart" (*Ps.* cxviii. 32). Whether our path be that of the counsels or that of the commandments, certain it is that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,

and the violent shall bear it away." Enlarge our hearts, O Lord, with good resolves, and ardent desires, so that we may journey, hastening and running forward, along the way of Thy commandments till we reach perfection. Amen.

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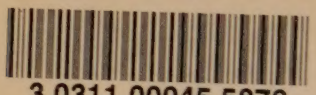

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